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Sophists, Socratics and Cynics

H.D. Rankin



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Sophists, Socratics and Cynics

The Sophists, the Socratics and the Cynics had one important characteristic in common: they mainly used spoken natural language as their instrument of investigation, and they were more concerned to discover human nature in its various practical manifestations than the facts of the physical world.

The Sophists are too often remembered merely as the opponents of Socrates and Plato. Rankin discusses what social needs prompted the development of their theories and provided a market for their teaching. Five prominent Sophists – Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, Hippias and Thrasymachus – are looked at individually. The author discusses their origins, aims and arguments, and relates the issues they focussed on to debates apparent in contemporary literature.

Sophists, Socratics and Cynics, first published in 1983, also traces the sophistic strand in Greek thought beyond the great barrier of Plato, emphasising continuity with the Cynics, and concludes with a look forward to Epicureans and Stoics.

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SOPHISTS, SOCRATICS AND CYNICS

H.D. RANKIN

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Adv. Math.</i>	Sextus Empiricus, <i>Adversus Mathematicos</i> (Against the Mathematicians)
<i>Append. Planud.</i>	<i>Appendix Planudea</i> (Palatine Anthology)
<i>Apol.</i>	Plato, <i>Apologia Socratis</i> (Apology (Defence) of Socrates)
<i>Ar. Met.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>Ar. Rhet.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Rhetorica</i> (Rhetoric)
<i>De Merc. Conduct.</i>	Lucian, <i>De Mercede Conductis</i> (On Paid Employment)
<i>De Myst.</i>	Andocides, <i>De Mysteriis</i> (On The Mysteries)
<i>De Offic.</i>	Cicero, <i>De Officiis</i> (On Obligations)
<i>De Office. Med.</i>	Galen, <i>De Officina Medica</i> (On the Medical Laboratory)
D-K	<i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> , Hermann Diels, herausgegeben von Walther Kranz (Dublin/Zurich 1969)
<i>Euthyd.</i>	Plato, <i>Euthydemus</i>
<i>Flor.</i>	Stobaeus, <i>Florilegium</i> (Anthology)
<i>Mem.</i>	Xenophon, <i>Memorabilia Socratis</i> (Reminiscences of Socrates)
<i>Ox. Pap.</i>	Oxyrhynchus Papyri
<i>Parm.</i>	Plato, <i>Parmenides</i>
<i>Presb. Christ.</i>	Athenagoras, <i>Presbyeia Christianon</i> (Defence of the Christians)
<i>Progymn.</i>	Theon, <i>Progymnasmata</i> (Rhetorical Handbook)
<i>Prot.</i>	Plato, <i>Protagoras</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	Plato, <i>Republica</i>
<i>Rhet. Alex.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Rhetorica ad Alexandrum</i>
<i>Rhet. Praecept.</i>	Lucian, <i>Rhetorum Praeceptor</i> (The Teacher of Rhetoricians)
<i>Soph. Elench.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Sophistici Elenchi</i> (Sophistic Fallacies)
<i>Soph.</i>	Plato, <i>Sophistes</i> (The Sophist)
<i>Vit. Soph.</i>	Philostratus, <i>Vitae Sophistarum</i> (Lives of the Sophists)
<i>Xen. Symp.</i>	Xenophon, <i>Symposium</i>

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PREFACE

This book proposes to give a running account, with some argument, of the interconnected phases of Greek intellectual history represented by Sophists, Socratic philosophers and the Cynics. These principally have in common the use of the spoken word as their main instrument of investigation. They can nearly all (including those who specifically disclaim it!) be considered as practitioners of that early argumentative stage of logic called *dialektike*, the 'conversational method' in philosophy; and in some cases its more combative variants 'antilogic' and 'eristic'.

I have referred in the text to ancient and contemporary authors where this seemed relevant, and I have tried to keep the references to a minimum. I am glad to have been able to take account of G.B. Kerferd's fine book, *The Sophistic Movement* (1981).

I owe grateful thanks to Mrs S.M. James for preparing the typescript. I am indebted also to Mr L.E. Bown who on behalf of Croom Helm has given me most efficient help.

For Anne and Aidan

SOPHISTS, SOCRATICS AND CYNICS

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1 THE SOPHISTIC MOVEMENT: BEGINNINGS AND IDENTITY

This book does not describe a unified philosophical movement. Its subject is a many-branched stream of ancient intellectual history running in its main course from approximately the middle of the fifth century BC to the end of the fourth century BC. The Sophists, Socrates and his successors, and the Cynics had one important characteristic in common: they mainly used spoken natural language as their instrument of investigation, and they were more concerned to discover human nature in its various practical manifestations than the facts of the physical world. Many of the individuals whom we shall discuss wrote books. Some, like Socrates, never wrote down their teachings. All, however, were philosophers of the living voice rather than the written word.

All practised what has been called the art of the *logos*. This word *logos* has a number of meanings in ancient Greek, covering 'word', 'statement', 'judgement', 'argument', 'reasoning', 'proposition'. There is an underlying notion of rationality in all its varied shades of significance. These philosophers worked on the widely held Greek assumption that if you can express a thought or an idea in an intelligible and, if possible, elegantly formed statement, this constitutes a step forward in human knowledge. Dialectic (*dialektike*) was the name generally applied to such conversational methods in philosophy. It had relations and offshoots such as 'antilogic' (*antiologike*) and 'eristic' (*eristike*) which will be considered later in this chapter.

The Sophists will be the principal topic of the earlier chapters, and we shall enquire now more narrowly who and what they were. The word *sophistes* is connected with *sophia*, 'wisdom', 'cleverness', 'skill'. The adjective which describes a person who has this quality is *sophos*, and the verb denoting the practice or acquisition of 'wisdom', 'skill', 'cleverness' is *sophizesthai*. From this verb comes the agent-noun *sophistes*, which means somebody who possesses or exercises *sophia*. In the context of our discussion a Sophist, or *sophistes*, is a man who claims to teach *sophia* and that unique quality *arete* which combines the factors both of high moral virtue and worldly success. *Sophistes* itself is older than this later fifth-century-BC meaning. In the ode which Pindar composed to celebrate the victory of Phylacidas of Aegina in

476 BC or thereabouts, the word is applied (*Isthmians* 5.28) to poets who are regarded as practitioners of sophia and can be referred to as *sophoi*, 'wise men', as they are in another of Pindar's poems (*Olympians* 1, 8-10). Not only poets but other categories of skilled people were called Sophists in antiquity: musicians, rhapsodes, prophets, the famous seven wise men of Greece, and the Ionian philosophers of the sixth century BC who speculated about the natural world. G. B. Kerferd lists them (Kerferd, 1950) and mentions that great inventive individuals, real or mythical, could also be called Sophists. Prometheus is given that name; so too is Plato. Socrates also is called a Sophist by the fourth century BC orator Aeschines (Kerferd, 1981, pp. 24-5; Sprague, 1972, pp. 1-2). In a well-known passage of Plato's *Protagoras* (316c, 5), the great Sophist after whom the work is named is made to refer to Homer, Hesiod, Simonides, and the mythical Orpheus and Musaeus as Sophists. In saying this he blends the traditional view of sophistes = sophos with the more modern idea of his own time that a Sophist is a professional teacher of skills in using languages and argument. The early poets were in a general sense considered to be the teachers of Greece, and this was still true in Protagoras' time (*Prot.* 325e). Protagoras intended to give his profession a long and respectable history. Sophists in his sense were people who professed to teach 'wisdom' and 'virtue' for a fee. They were a profession, but not a homogeneous one. Their main points in common were that they were paid for their teaching and that they based their teaching upon developed uses of language for imparting skill in argument and persuasion. Whether an individual Sophist's claim was to teach arete (virtue) or merely some argumentative technique or way of arranging language in the most impressive or convincing style, his concern was with the human realm and the association of man with man in the competitive life of Greek society. As we shall see in Chapter 4, one of the important topics was whether nature's promptings towards individual success and dominance should be encouraged rather than constrained by rule of law. Once a person realises that laws are mere agreements, he can pursue his personal ends with ruthless efficiency under the protective cover of apparent agreement with the rules that human beings have constructed in order to live together in relative peace. The Sophists in one way or another released their pupils from the inner need to conform with the traditional rules of the city state so that they were freer in themselves to be active in their pursuit of success without remorse of conscience. The Sophists did not, for the most part, intend to let loose unprincipled monsters on Greek society, but in some instances that is what they did

by means of a severe criticism of society which undermined accepted meanings of 'value' words. They were only incidentally interested in the nature of the universe, though there is some indication that physical science was part of the subject matter of their teaching (*Soph.* 232b). Protagoras is supposed to have thought, with Empedocles, and Democritus, the atomistic philosopher, that sense impressions were the result of physical effluences passing from the perceived object to the perceiver. If we had more of the fragments of his writings we might discover more about his interest in science (Kerferd, 1981, pp. 39). Sophists would use the theories of contemporary science, or any available subject matter, if it seemed useful for making their arguments convincing. They were fee-earning instructors rather than philosophers or scientists, and they operated in the applied rather than the pure area of education.

Many Greeks would have accepted the view attributed to Socrates (*Mem.* 8.3, 11) that the most important things are learned by hearing them spoken. The influence of the spoken word in fifth or fourth-century Athens was extremely strong and can hardly be over-emphasised. Poetry was orally learned from texts, and the Homeric poems were memorised as part of ordinary education. Reading was secondary in importance to speech and memory. The Sophists were strong adherents of this general view, and their methods of teaching by means of the spoken word were varied. One was the great set lecture or exhibition speech (*epideixis*). This was designed to inform by the beauty and strength of its imagery and the arrangement of its component words and phrases in the most elegant way. Another method involved seminars with a few people discussing a theme under the leadership of the Sophist. It has been thought that sessions of contentious argument also were held; but there is some doubt about that (Kerferd, 1981, p. 29). The *Euthydemus* of Plato seems to represent something of this kind. Short lectures on set themes were also given, like the *Helen* of Gorgias, or the correlative pair, *Odysseus* and *Ajax*, which are attributed to Antisthenes. If a student could acquire the art of making a long and persuasive speech he would be in a good position to become a success in politics. Longer discourses were relevant to the rhetorical strand in sophistic teaching, and public need for training in the art of speech-making was one of the originating ingredients of the intellectual ferment that produced the Sophists. The other significant strand in their teaching involved disputative argument as distinct from expository speeches, and the most able Sophists were effective practitioners in both (*Prot.* 334e, 4-335a, 3; *Gorgias* 449c). The purpose of devising

and propounding arguments, especially in question and answer form, was to win the contest, not necessarily to find out the truth. The tone of the disputes was competitive, and it is thought that Protagoras first gave them their combative characteristics. If he did, he was merely formalising the ordinarily aggressive style of contemporary conversation. The *agon* or contest appeared in various forms in politics, legal procedure, drama as well as in athletics.

I have mentioned 'dialectic', 'antilogic' and 'eristic': words which characterise the argumentation and debate of the Sophists and philosophers in the period we are considering. There is perceptible overlap in the meaning of these words; nevertheless, they represent quite distinct attitudes or policies in the conduct of discussion. Let me begin with eristic, the most extreme and clearly identifiable of these policies. The following extract from Plato's *Euthydemus* illustrates its character clearly. The *Euthydemus* has an outer dramatic framework in which Socrates describes to his friend Crito a conversation between two Sophists, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, with Cleinias, Ctesippus and himself. In this extract the Sophists confuse and defeat Cleinias. Socrates speaks first:

How can I give you, Crito, a proper account of what followed after that? It's a difficult task to recapitulate the talk of someone giving such an extraordinarily complete account of all wisdom. I suppose that like the poets I need to begin the narration by invoking the 'Muses' and 'Memory'. I think that Euthydemus started off something like this.

'Cleinias,' he said, 'which of two sets of human beings learns, the wise or the ignorant?'

The young fellow, faced with a question of this magnitude, began to blush and looked at him somewhat confused. Seeing he was puzzled,

'Don't worry, Cleinias,' I said, 'reply courageously whichever of the two seems to you to fit the case. I think that's the best thing to do.'

At this, Dionysodorus, leaning towards me and smiling, whispered in my ear and said,

'I tell you Socrates, I predict that whichever of the two the young man chooses, he'll be refuted.' Just as he was saying this, Cleinias happened to start on his reply. So it wasn't possible for me to warn him to be careful and he went and answered that it was the wise who learned.

Then Euthydemus said,

'You call certain people teachers, don't you?' And he agreed with that.

'Then,' he went on, 'isn't it a fact that teachers are teachers of those who learn just as the teacher of music and of grammar were, I suppose, teachers of you and other boys, while you, on your side, were learners?'

He agreed.

'Was your situation any different at the precise time when you were learning from the time when you did not yet know the things that you were learning?'

He said it wasn't.

'Were you then wise at the time when you didn't know these things?'

'Not at all,' said he.

'Then if you weren't wise, were you ignorant?'

'Of course.'

'Therefore in learning what you didn't know, you were doing your learning in a state of ignorance.'

The boy nodded in agreement.

'Therefore it is the ignorant who are the people who learn, Cleinias, and not, as you think, the wise.'

When he said this, those that came along with Dionysodorus and Euthydemus immediately cheered and laughed as if they were a chorus that had got a signal from its director. And before the young man had a chance to recover his breath properly, Dionysodorus took him up.

'Right, Cleinias,' he said, 'when your teacher of letters gave you a dictation, which group of the boys learned the dictated material? Was it the wise or the ignorant?'

'The wise,' said Cleinias.

'Therefore it was the wise that learned and not the ignorant and so your replies to Euthydemus just now were quite wrong.'

At this point the fan club of the two Sophists broke out into great laughter and cheering, delighted at the cleverness of them both. The rest of us were in a state of stunned silence. Euthydemus noticed our perplexity and wanting us to admire him even more, wouldn't let the young fellow go, but began to question him. And like a clever ballet dancer he made his question do a double turn on the same spot.

'Is it the case,' he said, 'that those who learn, learn what they know, or do they learn what they don't know?'

And Dionysodorus again whispered in my ear.

'You will see, Socrates, that this question will turn out exactly the same way as the previous one.'

'God save us,' I said, 'I thought the previous one was pretty good.'

'Socrates,' he said, 'all the things we ask are of a kind that allow no escape.'

'This is the reason, I guess,' said I, 'why you seem to have such a prodigious reputation with your students.'

At this point Cleinias replied to Euthydemus that those who learn, learn that which they do not know. Then he questioned him in the same terms as previously.

'Right,' he said, 'don't you know your letters?'

'Yes,' he said.

'And don't you know them all?'

He agreed.

'Now whenever a person gives you some dictation, isn't it letters of the alphabet that he dictates to you?'

He agreed.

'Doesn't he then dictate to you items that you know, if in fact you know them all?'

He agreed to all that.

'All right,' he said, 'you don't learn what is being dictated to you; it is the person who doesn't know his letters who learns.'

'No,' he said, 'I do learn.'

'Then,' he said, 'you are learning what you know since you admit you know your letters.'

He agreed.

'Therefore you haven't given a logical reply,' he said. This had hardly been uttered by Euthydemus when Dionysodorus, like somebody catching a ball, bowled it back at the young man and said,

'Cleinias, Euthydemus is misleading you. Tell me now, isn't learning the same as obtaining knowledge of a thing about which a person is learning?'

Cleinias agreed.

And then he said,

'Is knowing anything other than possessing knowledge?'

He agreed.

'Not knowing, then, is not yet having knowledge.'

He agreed with him.

'Now are people who obtain something those who possess it already, or those who do not yet have it? And haven't you agreed that those who do not know, belong to the class who do not yet possess knowledge?'

He agreed.

'Consequently those who learn belong to the class of those who obtain, not those who possess.'

He agreed.

'Therefore it is those who do not know who do the learning, Cleinias, and not those who do know.' (*Euthyd.* 275c, 5-277c, 7)

Cleinias is defeated by ruthless deployment of wordplay. Neither Dionysodorus nor Euthydemus are concerned with the true meanings of words like 'learn' and 'know', which could only be approached by a whole range of instances of their use honestly compared with each other. The learning situation and the learning process are monstrously confused in the arguments that deal with students receiving dictation. Crude definitions such as 'knowing' being the equivalent of 'having knowledge' together with the assumption that 'obtaining', 'having' bear the same meaning when used in reference to the process of knowing as they have when they refer to obtaining or possessing some concrete object, are designed to overthrow the innocent. Yet, apart from their intention to defeat rather than enlighten, and leaving aside the vociferous claque that abets them with a psychological warfare of hoots and cheers, the technique of this pair of Sophists has points in common with that of Socrates, namely the use of provisional definitions or examples and the extraction of conclusions from them. But these three elements that they share with Platonic-Socratic methods fail in philosophical effectiveness, because they are deliberately limited in their application in order to achieve a victory rather than carry forward the argument.

Another feature of this kind of argumentation is its emphasis upon dichotomy. A proposition is seen as either true or not true in the most exhaustive sense, allowing no gradations. This binary assumption, which allows only an 0 or a 1 in the question of 'being' has its origins in the Eleatic school of philosophy and in Parmenides, its originator, earlier in the fifth century BC. Parmenides maintains that all that can truly be said is 'it is', and that any modification of 'is' involves negativity, for 'is' is 'being' or 'existence' and partial or modified existence is not really existence at all. This polarised antipathy between 'is' and 'is not' is influential in sophistic thought well into the fourth century BC. Some of the logical problems that occupied the attention of the Megarian and other groups of philosophers who succeeded Socrates are similar in character and depend on assumptions of this kind. The problem of 'being' and the long-term influence of Parmenidean logic

will be considered in later chapters. At present we need only note this dichotomising tendency, which occurs in an astonishing form in eristic episodes of the *Euthydemus*.

Why should anybody want to learn the clever nonsense that Plato attributes to Euthydemus and his friends? We should bear in mind that when the Sophists first began to be noticed in Athens and acquired a clientele in the upper years of the last quarter of the fifth century BC, few people could tell the difference between a verbal trick and good logic, for both would appear equally effective in putting down opposition. However, the main answer lies in the group of enthusiasts who accompany the two Sophists in the *Euthydemus*. Whatever could excite the admiration of an audience, in law court or assembly, was a useful acquisition. Not only the ability to make a long and moving speech, but the capacity to conduct cross-examination and sharp interruption could be a useful asset. All careers in fifth-century-BC Greece were public careers, and survival in public life, quite apart from success, depended upon convincing your fellow citizens that you were right. Any means was useful that led to such an end. In the fourth century BC the continued liveliness of such argumentative practices amongst the Megarians and others, and indeed the vigorous survival of an intellectual sub-culture of Sophists still mulling over earlier puzzles, provoked Aristotle to speak of eristic in the following terms when he wrote his compendium of fallacies, the *Sophistici Elenchi*:

Just as cheating in a game and dirty fighting have a certain distinct character, so eristic is dirty fighting in argument. In the former case, those who are determined to win stop at nothing, and the same is true of eristic arguers. People who argue in this fashion merely to win, merely seem to be eristic and contentious. Those who do it for purposes of publicity and financial gain are considered to be Sophistic. Sophistry, as I have said, is a way of making money from a mere show of wisdom, and for this reason Sophists are interested in a show of logical proof. (*Soph. Elench.* 171b, 22-30)

Plato and Aristotle had come to dislike the Sophists and what they represented; but neither of them in writing respectively the amusing *Euthydemus* nor the more staid textbook *Sophistici Elenchi* was primarily concerned with belabouring the intellectual failings of a previous generation. They were concerned by the continuing prevalence in the fourth century of fallacious arguments eristically aimed at victory irrespective of the truth of the subject. We shall not forget,

however, that eristic was practised by the great early Sophist Protagoras, who wrote a *techne eristikon*, a manual of eristic arguments. Did he gather together a collection of the sort of logical tricks we see in *Euthydemus* and in Aristotle's monograph? If he did, it is strange that he does not show himself more comfortable than he actually turns out to be in the exchanges he has with Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras*, where the claim is certainly made that Protagoras is equally at home with brief cut-and-thrust as he is with long persuasive discourses (*Prot.* 329b-334e). Protagoras probably did collect fallacies and eristic manoeuvres and used them for teaching purposes. Perhaps, as Diogenes Laertius (9.51) says, Protagoras argued with his attention on the word rather than its meaning, and was the originator of eristic. His poor showing in argument with Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras* is easily explicable in that he is represented there as meeting not his match, but his master, in the art of dialectic.

Another mode of arguing is 'antilogic' (*antilogia*, *antilogikos*) which does not mean irrational or unreasoning argument, but rather the procedure of arguing by means of contradictory propositions. In antilogic we start from a basic idea and work out mutually contradictory conclusions from it, arriving, as may be expected, at a dead end (Guthrie, 1969, p. 177). Plato takes the view that this practice of reducing argument to contradictions tends to make its practitioners sceptical and distrustful of argument; '*misologoi*', 'argument-haters' is the name he finds for them (*Phaedo* 90c). *Antilogikoi* and *eristikoi* are mentioned together as separate classes by Plato, but he seems to think they have in common a preoccupation with victory in argument rather than finding the truth. Yet antilogikoi are beyond question more respectable than eristikoi, and their manoeuvres in discussion are not uncommonly sincere and directed towards eliciting a point of substance. In a lost dialogue called *Sophistes*, Aristotle says that Zeno of Elea invented dialectic (Diogenes Laertius 8.57). Possibly he is using the word dialectic in its more inclusive sense of all argument that involves the interplay of conversation. We cannot tell for certain. We can guess with some show of plausibility that he has in mind Zeno's book, which is mentioned in the *Parmenides* of Plato (127b-128a). Here Zeno reduces to contradictions and absurdity the various arguments used against Parmenides' assertion that only the 'one' is philosophically real, not plurality. It is reasonable to suppose that Zeno is concerned not so much to defend Parmenides' 'one', but rather to demolish the arguments for plurality put forward by opponents of the theory (Barnes, 1980, 1, pp. 232 ff). For example, he argues that if there is more

than 'one' the plurality will have to include items great and small, so great as to be of infinite magnitude, so small as to have no size. This is probably one of the famous forty arguments he produced against plurality and motion, all of which apparently used paradox and contradictory argument. This is the work of an antilogikos, and the term is certainly applied to him by Plato (*Phaedrus* 261c, 4-216e). Socrates' *elenchos*, the method of refutation by which he is shown in Plato's dialogues to elicit admissions contradictory to propositions already admitted to be correct, is a species of antilogic. In spite of much discussion (Gulley, 1968, pp. 66-7) there is no certain answer to the question whether Socrates developed his *elenchos* from methods already used by Sophists like Euthydemus, or even Protagoras, who wrote *Antilogiai*, which some have tried to identify with his *peri pales*; or whether it was he who influenced the development of the Sophists' argumentative methods. The *aporia*, or 'dead end' that concludes some of the earlier 'Socratic' dialogues of Plato, usually arises from the confrontation of contradictory conclusions. In a sense this is antilogic. The difference between sophistic antilogike and Socrates' teasing out of questions and identification of difficulties arising from the problem as distinct from solving the problem, lies in the intention of the discussion. It is the purpose and the mood in which the conversation is conducted that separates dialectic from antilogic.

Dialectic is the conversational method in philosophy, the power or capacity to philosophise by talking with others (*Rep.* 433c); it is the art of the logos (*Phaedo* 90b). Aristotle in his *Topica*, Book VIII, describes this conversational method in a way that suggests vigorous and crafty contention, almost as if it were an eristical war game, but in the *Sophistici Elenchi* he shows that he knows the difference between specifically sophistic practices and the true dialectic which has more serious matters in mind:

The man who scrutinises general ideas in relation to a particular instance practises dialectic; but the man who only apparently does this is a Sophist. Eristic and Sophistic reasoning is only apparent reasoning, and even if it arrives at a correct conclusion, it is the business of dialectic to examine it, for it is fallacious in respect of its causes. (*Soph. Elench.* 171b, 7-11)

This is another way of saying that dialectic is scrupulous in sifting out the subject matter with which it deals, and tries to avoid the confusions and ambiguities that attend eristic discussions like that

which we have seen in Plato's *Euthydemus*. According to Plato, dialectic insists upon dividing the subject matter of the conversational search into proper classes and kinds, and it is this in particular which is the sign of its honest purpose and effectiveness (*Rep.* 454a) (Robinson, 1940, p. 86). It is very clear in the passage quoted from the *Euthydemus* that different kinds and classes of 'knowing' and 'learning' are not properly sorted out. Not only are they not clarified in relation to each other; the fact of their mixture is enthusiastically exploited to achieve a victory. It is easy to step into this eristic trap, and with no less facility can one fall victim to *antilogike*. In Plato's lifetime, and Aristotle's, serious philosophers such as the Megarians and the followers of Antisthenes (see Chs 11 and 12 below) were still occupied with verbal paradoxes and puzzles that depended upon unwillingness or failure to sort out different kinds of meaning (*Ar. Met.* 1024a ff; Diogenes Laertius 2, 108). Young people vigorously tearing at a topic like puppies (*Rep.* 537e-539a), could find themselves using eristic methods before they knew it. Plato quotes an argument in *Rep.* 454c that has both eristic and antilogic characteristics. It does not represent his own approach to the problem it treats, but is a parody of antilogic. In its failure to analyse what it is talking about into properly separated kinds and its construction of a contradictory position, it resembles them both.

We can ask ourselves if the nature of bald men or hairy men is the same or opposite. If we agree it is opposite, then if bald men are shoemakers, we won't allow that there are hairy shoemakers; if hairy men are shoemakers, then bald men can't be. (*Rep.* 454c)

Because men are opposed to each other in respect of the possession of hair it does not mean that they can legitimately be thought to be opposite in every other respect. Aristotle would point out immediately that possession or not of hair was a contingent which told us nothing about the real nature of the men. Plato would take the view that in dealing with the problems involving bald and hairy men, we would need to sort them out more carefully, enquiring about bald men who are good musicians, for instance, and bad at leather work; hairy men who were good at both or neither. In fact he would advise us to discern what groups or classes amongst the men we could so that we could form an opinion about what it was that enables a man to be a shoemaker — very much the approach of Socrates in some of the early dialogues of Plato. But even fallacious argument, eristic and antilogical,

can nevertheless be very useful in the tough life of political and legal debates. The most rascally quibbles, then as now, were capable of successful practical application in the cruel world of politics. The Sophists supplied the need for training in skill with language that arose with the growth of more open and democratic politics in many of the city states. The beginnings of the sophist movement are indistinguishable from those of rhetoric with which it remains entangled until the fourth century BC. Aristotle in his lost *Sophistes* declared that Empedocles (from about 500 BC) discovered rhetoric, but another tradition names Corax (b. 506 BC) and Tisias of Syracuse as its originators. Corax is reputed to have been influential with the tyrant Hieron of Syracuse, and to have been involved in helping him to run the city. When Hieron died, about 466 BC, a democracy was established, and there was a spate of law cases to be dealt with following the overthrow of unconstitutional rule. Citizens needed instruction how to present their cases in court to best effect. Demand prompted the supply: Corax was already experienced in administration of law and the organisation of argument. He became a teacher. The question has often been considered whether Corax concentrated exclusively upon the forensic speech-making suitable for the courts of law rather than the deliberative or political style. The question is not relevant to the times which we are considering, in which there would not yet be any discernible difference between these two modes of oratory. Probably it was the need for speeches in court that was the particular motivation for Corax in beginning on his professional career. The disappearance of the tyranny would have left him with little to do. At any rate it is reasonable to link the beginnings of sophistry in its guise of rhetoric with a social change and a social need. Cicero (*Brutus* 46-8) attributes this explanation to Aristotle. A later writer, Hermogenes, in the second century AD confirms it: and so do others. It seems to be a reasonable explanation.

Corax is said to have used the notion of likelihood (*eikos*) in the construction of convincing arguments for his speeches. This involves an appeal to a proposition that will command the agreement of most people. Plato in his *Phaedrus* 273a-b ff attacks the use of *eikos* on the grounds that it represents a simple reference to the views of the ignorant majority; but in fact many dialectical arguments of the kind used by Socrates are based on such views. One of the points that defines dialectic, according to Aristotle (*Soph. Elench.* 165b, 4) is that its arguments are based on generally accepted notions — even if the intention is to deduce a contradiction from them. Eristic arguments, he

tells us, rely upon opinions which seem to enjoy general acceptance, but in fact do not. The argument of likelihood is susceptible to fallacy, as Aristotle points out in his *Rhetorica* 1402a. He tells how Agathon, a fifth-century BC dramatist with a dialectical turn of mind (he is a participant in Plato's *Symposium*), says in his dramatic verse that no particular probability is universally probable; the only universal likelihood he can think of is that unlikely things happen. Now if improbable things happen, then perhaps they should be classed as probable. This paradox does not work in all instances. Aristotle tells us that the deception arises from our omission to add a clause that defines the meaning of the proposition more narrowly in terms of relationship, reference or manner. So when we say that the improbable is really to be classed as probable because the improbable can happen, we are involved in the fallacy of presenting a statement about some particular improbable things that happen as if it were a general statement about improbable things. Aristotle says that Corax is guilty of this kind of deception, which would appear to put him firmly in the same intellectual pen as the eristics.

Eikos can help the wrong side to win an argument, can cause the worse reason to prevail over the better and more just. Aristotle gives us this following example (Ar. *Rhet.* 1402a, 18 ff), which he claims is characteristic of Corax's book on rhetoric:

If a weakling is to be tried for assault, the defence is that he is not likely to do such a thing; but if the defendant in an assault case is a strong man, the defence will still be that he was not likely to do it, since he can be sure that people will think him obviously capable of it.

This use of eikos, as Aristotle suggests, certainly allows the weaker argument to prevail over the stronger. We are in the same atmosphere of argument as Euthydemus and Dionysodorus.

Dialectic and eristic have their origins in the wrangling of the law courts (Hinks, 1940, p. 62). This story told of Corax and Tisias illustrates the point. Corax promises Tisias that he can train him for a certain sum to win any case at law. Tisias receives the training and refuses to pay. If Corax wins the law suit he takes up against his student, he does not merit payment by the terms of the contract. If Tisias wins, he does not have to pay. The story goes on that the jury threw the case out with the proverbial utterance: *kakou korakos kaka oa*, 'bad eggs are all you are likely to get from a bad crow'. The name

'Corax' means 'crow'. But the same story, Diogenes Laertius says, is told of Protagoras and Euathlos, and if we attach any importance to this reference, it might suggest that the story represents a school exercise, a dilemma for pupils to tackle. Possibly it comes from the handbook, or *techne*, that Tisias is supposed to have written. Aristotle seems to refer to a *techne* composed by Corax (Ar. *Rhet.* 1402a, 18). Other references will suggest that the first handbook on rhetoric was written by Tisias. Aristotle's *Sophistici Elenchi* 183b and Cicero's *De Inventione* 11, 6 seem to present this view; and so also does Plato in *Phaedrus* 267a, 273a ff. Cicero's *Brutus* 46, on the other hand, apparently indicates that both Corax and Tisias were authors. In none of the passages mentioned is the wording incontestably precise; and it is far from unequivocal in this reference from the *Brutus*. Its information probably comes from Aristotle's lost work *Synagoge Technon*, or 'list of hand books'. There is no way in which we can extract certainty from these various views; but it is reasonable to regard Corax as the originator, and Tisias the pupil who expanded and advanced the foundation work of his teacher. Which of the two wrote, or whether both wrote the handbook or handbooks, remains uncertain. A later commentator says that Corax taught for money, and Tisias was his pupil.

Mid-fifth-century-BC thinking regarded language as something innate in man which he himself could develop and evolve by deliberate effort. Use of language was also associated with civilised ways of living. If we look at the famous choral ode in Sophocles' *Antigone* that celebrates the uniqueness of man in the world and mankind's remarkable achievements we find this idea quite clearly stated:

and language and thought quick as the wind
and civilised temper of communal life
these he taught himself,
as well as how to avoid
exposure to the frosts of the sky
and the grim stormy missiles of rain (354-9)

Language, thought and civilised behaviour go together, and man has taught these to himself. There is no suggestion that the development of these is automatically natural or spontaneous in him; they are innate but subject to his own wish to develop them. This play was produced in 441 BC, and reflects contemporary interest in the question of language and social evolution. In Plato's dialogue *Protagoras*,

the character Protagoras gives a semi-mythical account of human social development. He tells how the weak, relatively defenceless animal that was man first got the gift of fire that helped him to survive in a hard world. Then he invented religion, the only animal to do so. After this he quickly articulated speech and words by means of his skill (*Prot.* 322a).

It was some time after this, according to Protagoras' account, that he managed to acquire civilisation. There is a distinct spacing out in time in Protagoras' story between man's invention of language and the gift he received from the gods of those decencies, self-control and justice that made civilised living possible. Their association in Sophocles' lines is compressed, as we might expect in poetry. But perhaps the most noticeable point of similarity in the two accounts is that man by his own agency taught himself how to use language. The phrase that Plato makes his Protagoras use is even more suggestive: 'articulated speech and words by means of his skill'. The point is: he joined speech and words together to make intelligible utterance, imposed shape and structure upon mere vociferation.

There is no need to argue in detail whether Sophocles could have been influenced by Protagoras — assuming, as it is reasonable to assume, that Plato is presenting us with a fair but not obsessively accurate account of Protagoras' actual views on the question. Protagoras' connections with Athens go back to 444 BC at least, when he was given a contract by the Athenians to devise a constitution for Thurii, the colony they decided to found in Italy. This was not a responsibility that they were likely to entrust to an unknown or untried teacher from Abdera, a remote city. Protagoras was on friendly terms with Pericles, and Sophocles also was a member of Pericles' circle. The connection is clear enough and need not be laboured. The importance of language in the upward development of the species indicated both by Sophocles and Protagoras becomes a commonplace; for we find it echoed in the fourth century BC by Isocrates in his essay *Nicocles* or *The Cyprians* 6, where he tells us that logos or speech, by enabling us to persuade each other rather than live like animals, brought about civilisation. He says this in a passage which has some distinct verbal traces of the influence of Protagoras' speech in Plato's dialogue. In the first century BC Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca Historica* 1.8) speaks of primitive man's need to co-operate with his fellows in order to resist the attacks of wild beasts. For this purpose men at first used signs, and then they in time shaped the sounds they made to each other so that articulate speech developed from what had previously been mere confusion. Mutually unintelligible groups of men grew up in different parts of the world,

using different words from other groups: hence comes about the difference in languages between tribes and nations. Diodorus tells us that the members of a group agreed with each other about the words that were to be used for various objects. Another first-century-BC writer, the great statesman, orator and scholar Marcus Tullius Cicero, says that it was reason that brought about the development of articulated speech, classifying sounds, linking them to various objects to which they are made to refer (*De Re Publica* 3. 2, 3). He goes on to mention the invention of writing and numbers.

The active agency of human intelligence and will in the formation of language is strongly upheld in the passages I have mentioned. Language was not simply given to mankind like the fire that Prometheus stole from heaven to ensure human survival. It is not an instrument placed in his hands but a faculty that he himself can develop and change. Human beings were envisaged as making up words and applying them to nature in much the same way as they make up laws to be applied to the conduct of life. The Sophist Antiphon in the fifth century BC uses the expression *nomothetemata* (legislations) for the process of inventing words, and he seems to be of the opinion that the making of words is properly done when it is in accordance with the 'forms' or categories of things in nature, so that the distinction between real things is correctly maintained in language. There was also discussion about the nature of the relationship of words to realities. Plato's dialogue *Cratylus* discusses the fifth-century question which remained alive in his own time (Kerferd, 1981, p. 68). It describes an inconclusive conflict between two positions; one is that language and reality are continuous, and that words imitate or represent the objects they describe; the other viewpoint claims that words are a matter of what at any given point is agreed to be the names of real objects. The discussion is inconclusive, but it shows that the connection of name to object was regarded as a philosophical, not merely a stylistic or rhetorical problem. We shall see that other Sophists, Protagoras, Hippias, Prodicus, were similarly preoccupied with 'correctness' of names, *onomaton orthotes*, *orthoepeia*. This implies that it is important not merely to choose the persuasive word, but the word which is persuasive because it is right. Gorgias' concentration upon emotive and baroque poetic phrases takes him in a different direction on the question. 'Correctness' of names, with the fine distinction which it implies in shades of meaning between words, makes Socrates' dialogue possible. It was not merely a technique but an aim; as C.J. Classen (1959, p. 218) points out, it was a 'slogan rather than a tool'.

The Sophists were more interested in language than in *physis* (nature), and they saw the world as a province for dialectical investigation rather than physical research, but they could not have emerged if the Greeks of their time had not been at least in part free from inherited superstitious fears that so often inhibit critical enquiry. They owe much more to Parmenides and Zeno, but it would be unfair to exclude the influence of the philosopher scientists of Miletus who explain the universe without special reference to the gods. The Sophists tried to explain humanity to itself without reference to the gods and to criticise such respected institutions as the family, the conventional pieties of clan and city, indeed the whole accepted way of Greek city-state life. Their teaching excited some, unbalanced others, and the final reaction of ordinary citizens, whose irritation with them is described in some of Aristophanes' comedies, was the condemnation of an apparent Sophist, Socrates. They were despised by many respectable persons. A stiff-necked, upper-class Athenian, Xenophon, says that the Sophist is a slave to the public and to money. In Plato's *Protagoras* a young man of good family, Hippocrates, is deeply embarrassed by the suggestion that his reason for becoming a student of Protagoras may be that he has ambitions to become a Sophist himself (Kerferd, 1981, p. 26). Yet the more important Sophists commanded impressive fees, and their arrival at a city was as much a cause of excited public expectation as the visit of a foreign potentate. The Sophists came mostly from cities other than those in which they practised their profession. If they were regarded with a mixture of unease and adulation, to some extent this was a result of their being foreign. More important, no doubt, was the fact that there was no social slot in Athenian society into which they could be placed. They were eccentric. They were also highly characteristic of an age in which social changes were taking place that found overt expression in their teaching and were accelerated by it.

2 FIVE PROMINENT SOPHISTS: PROTAGORAS, GORGIAS, PRODICUS, HIPPIAS, THRASYMACHUS

I intend to consider in the following pages five prominent Sophists who seem to be the most lively and creative participants in this intellectual movement. They vary considerably in their interests and inventiveness, but all are usually regarded as being in the first rank of importance. This classification is necessarily subjective, and its motives include literary convenience as well as selective judgement. I do not intend to insult the memory or achievements of less eminent Sophists I shall discuss in Chapter 3. At least one of them, Antiphon, could easily be included with this five. Plato was fascinated by the Sophists as well as being dismayed by the intellectual and moral consequences of their work. Four of those discussed in the present chapter have dialogues devoted to their name. Even if we do not accept the analysis of the *Republic* into a '*Thrasymachus*' which consists of Book I that was subsequently developed into the *Republic* through a change of the authorial mind, it is true that Thrasymachus is the most striking and powerful character in the whole work, apart from Socrates.

Protagoras

Protagoras was the first to call himself a Sophist and to take fees for his teaching. So Plato tells us in his *Protagoras* (317b):

Protagoras has just suggested that Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod, Homer and other sage poet teachers of the past were Sophists in reality though not in name. He claims to follow in their footsteps but:

'I have taken the opposite road from them in that I openly admit that I'm a Sophist and that I educate people.'

Shortly afterwards (*Prot.* 317c) he says:

'I've been many years now in this profession; a very large number altogether. There is not one of you whose father I might not be.'

In Plato's *Meno* (91d-e), Protagoras is said to have died at the age of 70, and to have been a Sophist for forty years. The comic dramatist

Eupolis mentions Protagoras as being in Athens in 422 BC. There are strong arguments for putting the dramatic date of Plato's *Protagoras* in 433 BC (Morrison, 1941, pp. 1-3) and if at that time, when Socrates (d. 399 BC at age 70) was 36 years of age, Protagoras must have been at least about twenty years older than Socrates; which would put his birth-year about 490 BC. There are other more detailed arguments on this question, but they need not concern us. Neither need the story attributed to the historiographer Philochorus (fourth century BC) that Protagoras lived until 90 years of age and died in a sea disaster on his way to Sicily; nor that Euripides refers to this in his *Ixion*, though we can accept the story that Protagoras was a friend of Euripides. It is reasonable to put the year of Protagoras' death at about 421 BC.

He came from Abdera, a city of Thrace remote from the main centres of Greek civilisation. It was no paltry place, however, for it produced the atomistic philosopher Democritus, who, though he was considerably younger than Protagoras, is supposed to have influenced his thought. According to Diogenes Laertius (9.50) Protagoras was the son of a rich man whose name is variously given as Maiandrius or Artemon. In the third century AD Philostratus wrote in his book on the Sophists (*Vit. Soph.* 1.10, 1) that Protagoras' father had been on terms of friendship with Xerxes, and that during the Persian occupation of the region in the second phase of the Persian invasions of Greece (480 BC), Protagoras had been taught by magi; which required special permission from the great king himself. Philostratus implies that the influence of the magi aroused scepticism about the gods in their pupil.

Another version of his early life occurs in Hesychius (fifth century AD) and is also mentioned by Diogenes Laertius, who attributes it to Aristotle. This says that he was a porter and the inventor of a carrying frame to lighten the work of members of that occupation. Carrying a bundle of wood, he was first noticed by Democritus who took an interest in him.

These stories are not impressively compatible, and we shall never know the whole truth unless more evidence becomes available. There is little likelihood that a man of conspicuously humble origin would have been given the task by the Athenians of composing a constitution for a new city, as Protagoras was appointed to do for Thurii in 444 BC. Democracy did not go as far as that in the middle of the fifth century BC. The possibility that the son of a rich family would deliberately take up a humble calling on philosophical grounds is equally unlikely at this period, though it cannot be completely excluded. There is also the statement attributed to Epicurus that Protagoras came to his career late in life.

Whatever his origins were, Protagoras was a man of conspicuous and varied originality. He made important contributions to rhetoric, epistemology, the critical study of religion, the study of social origins, dialectic and literary criticism. He wrote books on all of these subjects, but none of his work has survived except in a few quoted fragments. His influence upon succeeding centuries was marked. Statue bases found in connection with the Serapeum in Memphis show that amongst the statues of the undeniably great — Plato, Thales, Heraclitus — a statue of Protagoras also was erected. He was therefore famous in Ptolemaic Egypt, and held to be one of the great philosophers of Greece (Kerferd, 1981, p. 43). Although we do not possess his books, we can form a reasonable understanding of the main points of his teaching, not only from references in later authors, but from the by no means uniformly unfriendly, though always critical, account of him in Plato's *Protagoras* and later in the *Theaetetus*. Well on in the third century AD his books could still be found in the Greek world. The neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry mentions that he happened to find one of his books. This was a book on the nature of being (*Peri tou Ontos*) in which Protagoras attacks the view maintained by Parmenides and his followers that 'being is one'. Porphyry's remarks show that Protagoras' books were rare in a time when many ancient books were lost. What he says reinforces the evidence of the statue bases. In order to survive, the books would have to be recopied every generation or so. For the trouble and expense to be worthwhile, the author would have to be regarded as significant.

Protagoras' best known work was called *Aletheia* (Truth) or *Katabal-lontes Logoi* (The Knock-down Arguments). The two titles are generally regarded as referring to a single work. In this work, which by its very title (whichever you prefer) suggests controversy, Protagoras makes his best-known statement. He begins his book by saying:

Man is the measure of all things; of the things that are, that they are; of the things that are not, that they are not. (Plato, *Theaetetus* 151e-152a; *Adv. Math.* 7.60)

This is a powerful and individual formulation. No doubt as early as the sixth century BC philosophers of nature like Thales or Anaximander, in their ingenious interpretations of the universe as being based upon one entity, water, and the indefinite (*to apeiron*) respectively, were assuming a prime epistemological authority for man. But the statement of such a view in full deliberation as the first premise of a chain

of arguments required intellectual and moral strength of no trifling order. Protagoras is thinking of a universe in which the individual is the only valid measuring instrument of reality: he is the *criterion* and the evidence of his perception is immediate and unchallengeable. Everything perceived is true, but not all perceptions are the same. Nor is there any implication that reality consists of mere perceptions. There is an external reality, but it can be registered only by the individual 'measure' (*metron*) which is the perceiving person, and what this person perceives cannot be called false.

Clearly this standpoint has deep implications for any view of man's involvement in the cosmos and with his fellow creatures. Everybody's perceptions are true, but they are not, he explains (*Theaetetus* 166d) equally good; and this escape from universal validity of subjective judgements is interesting in its blend of ethical and ontological considerations. We are reminded of Plato's 'good' which is true or real in the fullest sense as well as being morally 'good' in the best possible sense. But Plato's views are more restrictive. Protagoras' teaching about social and political virtue, which attributes some political virtue to each human being as a divine endowment, fits in with his view of the individual as *metron*. All mankind makes true judgements which cannot be called in question in respect of truth; all mankind is endowed with some portion of social virtue. There is room for a broad sense of participation, a theoretical space into which democracy may be fitted.

Protagoras also wrote about the gods, and in doing so won himself the reputation of being a sceptic or *atheos*. Our modern word 'atheist' is too strong to give the meaning of *atheos* fairly. We have no reason to think that Protagoras completely disbelieved in the existence of gods when he wrote:

I have no capability of knowing about the gods, whether they are or are not, nor what they are like in appearance. There are many impediments to knowledge in this subject, including the obscurity of the subject matter and the brevity of life. (Diogenes Laertius 9.51; Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 14.3, 7)

These sentiments are said to have earned him the public wrath of the Athenians. His books were burned and he was forced to leave the city. This story is repeated by several of our sources, but it seems to be somewhat out of harmony with Plato's *Meno* 91d e, where Protagoras' reputation is said to have been unimpaired throughout his career. If he had been accused on a charge of impiety (*asebeia*) it seems

likely that the incident would have been alluded to in Plato's *Apologia Socratis* or that of Xenophon (Bluck, 1964, p. 359). Again, we cannot be completely certain: it could be that the passage in the *Meno* is speaking specifically of his intellectual fame throughout Greece, which need not necessarily have been damaged by his falling foul of the Athenians' hypersensitive laws on impiety.

In Chapter 5 we shall discuss more clearly the implications of the 'man-measure' principle, together with other questions relating to the epistemology and the theories of 'being' put forward by the Sophists and others. Public attitudes to the publication of material apparently hostile to traditional views of the gods will be discussed in connection with Socrates in Chapters 8 and 9. Protagoras' account of the origins of society and social virtue will be considered in relation to the views of other Sophists in Chapter 4. However, I think that we already have material that proves sufficiently the original and vigorous character of Protagoras' thought.

I shall conclude these pages on Protagoras with brief mentions of other facets of his teaching. First, I wish to stress that in spite of his philosophical preoccupation Protagoras remained in a most important sense a rhetorician. He is also supposed to have invented eristic, which I suppose we may interpret to mean he deliberately formalised dialectical tricks already in popular use. Diogenes Laertius (9.52) tells us that Protagoras set aside *dianoia* (intelligence or meaning) and argued in eristic fashion by means of purely verbal argument. There is little evidence to be found of his skill in this area in Plato's representation of him in the *Protagoras*, but he is probably being shown as deliberately avoiding the challenge of Socrates' purposely eristic opening of the discussion (*Prot.* 333a). We shall discuss this point in Chapter 5, when we come to consider some questions relating to the 'first philosophy' of the Sophists, their basic views on 'being' and their skills in dialectic. We shall also consider there in some detail the philosophical implications of another doctrine associated with Protagoras. This is his view that there are two *logoi* opposed to each other, available about every subject (Diogenes Laertius 9.51). This chimes attractively enough with the view that each individual is a valid metron of what is true, and that individuals need not agree in their apprehension of reality without either of them being wrong. It seems to agree with the relativism of that fifth-century-BC tract *Dissoi Logoi* (Two Fold Arguments), which contains many instances of two *logoi* expressing diverse attitudes to the same subject. But there is no reason to suppose that Protagoras was talking about two opposed *logoi* for each subject in a strictly

philosophical way. More probably he was thinking in terms of debate rather than strict logic. A rhetorician can reasonably be expected to be able to make up a case both for and against any given subject. The two logoi clash in court or assembly or wherever the contest is staged, and it is the *logos* which is more convincing that prevails. Both may be true, both false; but that is not the point. Victory is the point. Now according to Protagoras' metron doctrine, both may be regarded as representing truth, but there is the expectation that only one will win, even if that is a matter of the lesser argument prevailing over the stronger. Apart from Diogenes Laertius, other authority for Protagoras' view about the two opposed arguments is Seneca, and he describes it in terms of people arguing with equal vigour on both sides of a question, that is he sees it in rhetorical rather than logical or philosophical terms (Seneca, *Epistles* 88.48).

Protagoras is also credited with the opinion that 'contradiction is impossible' (*ouk estin antilegein*), itself a self-contradictory statement. He and his followers, according to Plato (*Euthyd.* 286b-c) used it excessively, and so also did earlier people. This piece of evidence generates a problem. Although the notion that 'contradiction is impossible' is compatible with the man/metron doctrine, it seems to be in conflict with the view that two opposed logoi are possible about any subject. Again, we may cite the apparent rhetorical emphasis of the two-logoi doctrine in order to avoid an unpalatable opposition between these strands of Protagoras' thought.

More will be said later about the significance and mutual relationship of his doctrines. At this point we may leave them to stand as they are without greater difficulty than that which inevitably occurs when fragmentary material is under scrutiny, and there is no continuous tissue between the surviving pieces of information. We should also bear in mind that it could be imprudent to try to make out a logically faultless system of thinking from the fragments. No law of nature entails that a creative thinker should be completely consistent. And in what we have seen already of his various teachings it should, I believe, be clear that we have in Protagoras a man of outstanding originality and vividness of mind.

Gorgias

Gorgias of Leontini in Sicily was born around 480 BC, and is said by several of our sources to have lived more than a hundred years. The

tenth-century-AD lexicon, the *Suidas*, mentions that he was a pupil of Empedocles, a philosopher well known for his theory of the cosmic cycle. Probably he was also acquainted with Tisias who, according to one of our authorities, came with him to Athens in 427 BC (Pausanias 6.177 ff). He stayed in Athens more than once and came to spend many years of his life there; but his first known visit was in 427 BC when he came as a member of a diplomatic mission on behalf of Leontini seeking Athenian alliance against the Syracusans. Thucydides (3.86) mentions this embassy, but does not speak of Gorgias by name. He is mentioned by Aristophanes in his *Wasps* (420 ff) and in the *Birds* (1694). The *Wasps* was produced in 422 BC and the *Birds* in 414 BC: Gorgias was of sufficiently continuous notoriety to provide usable material for Aristophanes' satire during this period.

His greatest fame was as an orator and stylist. Some of the techniques which he introduced in rhetoric remained influential in Greek and Roman education for nearly a thousand years. Plato's dialogue, the *Gorgias*, properly represents him as the advocate of rhetoric as the medium of education that deals with matters of the greatest importance in society: questions of statecraft and political decision. He was interested in the use of language as a means of persuasion rather than as a dialectical instrument for the scrutiny of meaning and discovering of truth, and in many ways he had the mind and talent of a great poet. Philostratus compares him to Aeschylus (*Vit. Soph.*, 1.9, 1). Yet he lived the life of a Sophist, rather than a rhetorician, and thought it was his business to teach skill with words in speech-making. He may also have claimed to be able to teach, if need be, virtue such as justice, which is necessary for the orator. At all events, the claim is made for him by his adherent Polus in Plato's *Gorgias* (461b), and 'Gorgias' himself neither accepts nor denies it.

He chose to give his contemporaries prime examples of his rhetorical power in the epideictic or exhibition speeches he delivered at the Olympian and Pythian games. The tone of the speeches, and also that which he is reputed to have given in Athens as a funeral oration over the dead of the Peloponnesian war, was pan-Hellenic. There should be no war between Greeks; there was much more to be said for the Greek states uniting against the 'Medes and Persians' (*Vit. Soph.*).

His distinguished pupil, the rhetorician Isocrates (436-338 BC) urged this policy in the fourth century BC. In his *Panegyricus* (c. 390 BC, published several years later) he urged co-operation between Athens and Sparta; his *Philippus* (c. 346 BC) urged Philip II of Macedon to undertake leadership of the Greek cities against Persia, and he also

addressed Alexander of Pherae and Agesilaus, the Spartan king, on the same subject. Isocrates' teacher initiated this line of persuasion in the fifth century, dismayed as he was by the internecine destructiveness of the Peloponnesian war in which his own city of Leontini fell a victim. Isocrates was a successful educator who applied rhetoric and literature to the development of intellectual and moral qualities in his pupils, and followed his teacher in refraining from making grandiose claims to teach virtue (*Meno* 95c) or discover fundamental reality.

Another noted student of Gorgias was Alcidas, who is credited with liberal views on the question of slavery; and Antisthenes, who has claims to be regarded as the originator of the Cynic movement, and was also a friend and pupil of Socrates (see Chapter 12 below). Philostratus records that Gorgias' teaching influenced such distinguished contemporaries as Pericles and Thucydides, who were already in their maturity; also Critias, Alcibiades and the tragedian Agathon among those who were younger than himself. Xenophon dryly remarks that Proxenus of Boeotia wanted to become capable of doing important things, and to achieve this end paid large fees to Gorgias. The acquaintance of distinguished characters such as those whom Philostratus mentions would be a good advertisement for Gorgias' revenue-earning educational activities and would attract men like Proxenus. Meno of Thessaly, another second-rate man of action like Proxenus, was also taught by him.

For a number of years from 428 BC Gorgias lived in Athens. Plato in his *Apology of Socrates* makes his hero speak of him as if he were alive, and the dramatic date of the *Apology* as we know is 399 BC. Elsewhere Plato testifies to the great impression Gorgias made upon the Athenians (*Hippias Major* 282b). The important early dialogue, *Gorgias*, is written in a manner respectful to its subject, but it is by no means in agreement with Gorgias' advanced claims for rhetoric as a system of education. Gorgias had visited Thessaly and drew great enthusiasm during the time he lived there. Philostratus says that the poet Agathon *gorgiazēi* (gorgianises) – so marked is the influence of Gorgias' style in the iambic verses of his drama – and we also learn from Philostratus that this same verb *gorgiazein* became the stock idiom in Thessaly for 'practising rhetoric' (*rhētořeuein* would be more usual). His impact was extraordinary upon those who knew him or were taught by him, and Plato's criticisms of his teaching should not induce us to underestimate it.

Towards the end of his life he went north once more, and lived at the court of Jason of Pherae who held power between 380 and 370 BC.

There he passed the last years of his life in comfort. His eloquence and great age suggested comparison with Homer's Nestor (Plato, *Phaedrus* 261c), and towards the end he was in a drowsy state of mind which did not so blunt his acuteness of intellect that he could not express himself with characteristic aptness about his condition: 'Already sleep is beginning to hand me over to his brother', he said.

He did not settle permanently in any city and did not acquire citizenship in any of the places where he lived. Nor did he ever marry. In telling us this, Isocrates (*Antidosis* 156) adds that he never had to pay taxes; but he seems to regard the fortune Gorgias left as being small in proportion to his fees and fame. Athenaeus (fifth century AD) quotes these remarks about Gorgias' long life: 'This same Klearchus says in the eighth book of his *Lives* that Gorgias lived with his wisdom for almost eighty years because of his moderate way of life' (Athenaeus 548c-d). Perhaps 'lived with his wisdom' is a phrase related to the duration of his professional life, which, as we have noted, may not have begun until he was nearly 30. The passage continues:

And when somebody asked him what habits of life he followed to have lived in so balanced and vital a way for so long, he said: 'Because I never did anything for the sake of pleasure'.

Demetrius of Byzantium says in the fourth book of his work *On Poems*, that when Gorgias was asked what was the reason why he had lived more than a hundred years, he said: 'Because I never did anything for anybody else's benefit'.

No doubt these stories, from late and dubious biographical traditions, should be received with caution. They could be said to have a suspiciously Cynic tinge, if we were not aware that the acerbity associated with the Cynic movement has its root in the general inherited Greek culture. Anyway, these are the replies Greeks would have expected of a sage. Even if we do not accept their historicity, we can accept that the literary fact of their existence in story proves the historical fact of his enduring fame.

We have seen that Protagoras was considerably occupied in his treatise on the gods with the difficulties involved in understanding an obscure subject. Much the same hesitations seem to have affected him when he talked about mathematics. In particular he thought that diagrams did not correspond to mathematical reality: when we talk, for instance, of a tangent touching a circle we are not talking about realities (Ar. *Met.* 997b, 32). I do not think that these are instances of

a Sophist trying to enhance his reputation by emphasising the difficult and impressive character of his subject matter. I think we see Protagoras facing up to difficulties which seem real and important to him. Knowledge of such matters is impeded by various obstacles and may not be possible at all. Socrates emphasised most persistently his own lack of knowledge, and in the following few pages we shall see that Gorgias finds himself confronted with insuperable obstacles to knowledge of reality. It is too easy to say that Sophists used their dialectical skill at the social and professional rather than the scientific level, and allowed themselves to pretend and generate frustration in their search for deeper understanding. It is fairer to say that their dialectical methods made them more aware of the difficulties involved when you claim to 'know' something. We are talking, of course, of the great and respectable, like Protagoras and Gorgias, and not of more easy-going practitioners whose acquaintance we have already made in the discussion of passages from Plato's *Euthydemus*.

I believe that when Gorgias tries to prove that 'nothing exists', he is confronting a problem which he believed to be serious. We have considerable information about his essay *On the Non Existent* or *On Nature* preserved in a work that used to be attributed to Aristotle, *On Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias*. Sextus Empiricus (second century AD) also has a summary of it in his work *Against the Mathematicians* 7, 65-87. The *MXG*, as the former little work is usually called, probably contains material that antedates Plato and Aristotle (Kerferd, 1955, p. 4). The way in which it uses the verb 'to be' in its arguments shows no trace of their advances in understanding the differences in its meaning (e.g. in the simplest terms: 'be' = exist, and 'be' that merely links a predicate to a subject as in 'the book is heavy'). However, when we come to see later on the way in which members of the Socratic schools varied in their appreciation or incomprehension of this and other differences in its meaning, we may find this point less than conclusive. The attitude that the verb 'to be' always involved 'existence' remained stubbornly and primitively alive during the greater part of the fourth century BC as well as in the fifth. Isocrates in *Helena* 1 complains about the philosophical longevity of people who say you cannot contradict or utter (meaningfully) a negative proposition. He seems to have unreconstructed Protagoreans in mind. Plato in *Sophistes* 251c implies that those old believers in an exclusively 'existential' verb 'to be' currently have the opportunity of knowing better. So does Aristotle in his criticism of Antisthenes and his followers in *Metaphysics* 1024b, 32-4 and 1043b, 23-8. Nevertheless, the tone and

style of the preserved arguments in *MXG* and Sextus, in spite of some textual problems, give the distinct impression of pre-Platonic origins.

Gorgias' object in his discussion is to reverse Parmenides' principle 'it is' and substitute 'it is not'. Parmenides would not allow that 'it is' (or 'being exists') admitted any modification. You cannot say of 'what is' anything other than that it *is*; for if you do, you dilute the purity of the 'is'. A thing cannot 'be' to a greater or lesser extent; it simply 'is'. If you dilute the 'is' with negatives or in any other way you are no longer saying that 'it is'. You are saying that it partly *is* and this implies something other than 'is'. Something other than *is* has to be *is not*.

Kerferd's discussion of Gorgias' essay (1955) reviews various opinions that scholars have held of it. A by no means unpopular view is that Gorgias was writing a satire of Parmenides and the Eleatic School, and that his intention was not wholly serious. If this is right, then we must recall that many a true word is spoken in jest. Even if he harboured a mischievous component in his creative intention, this hardly detracts from the force of his argument, given his retention of this old fashioned view of the verb 'to be'.

In Chapter 5 more will be said about 'being'. For the present let us look at Gorgias' three main arguments.

The first is that 'nothing is'. He says if that which is not, is, then it necessarily is and is not at the same time: which is a contradiction. Also, if that which is not, is, then that which is, cannot be: for the two are opposed to each other. If you can say of 'what is not' that 'it is', then you can equally say of 'what *is*', that 'it *is not*'. Neither of the two will have any claims to exist.

I have been trying to avoid using words like the 'existent', 'existence', 'what exists', etc., in order not to beg questions about Gorgias' thesis that I hope to consider later. I shall now abandon this hopeless struggle in the interests of verbal convenience. I shall go on to mention his view (without prejudice to subsequent discussion) that if what exists, the 'existent', exists, then it must be eternal or else have been generated at some point in time. If it is eternal and therefore not generated (at any time), it must be without limit. If it has no limit, it cannot really exist anywhere: if it is nowhere, it does not exist. If it were somewhere, it would have to be located in something else. If it is located in something, that something would have to be bigger than it. If something is bigger than it is, then the existent itself cannot be unlimited. Also the thing in which it is located or contained, also must be an existent. If this is so, then the existent is both place and body which (in Eleatic terms) is absurd. (Absurd also is the idea that the

existent is two rather than one.) So if the existent is eternal, it is also without limitation, if it is without limitation it is in no particular place, if it is in no particular place, it does not exist.

Nor can the existent be something that is generated. If it was generated it would need to have been generated either out of something that exists or does not exist. If it came from something that exists, then there was an existent already, and the process was superfluous. If it came from some non-existent, that would be absurd, because the non-existent by definition must be incapable of generating anything.

Something that is neither eternal nor generated cannot exist. Now suppose again that there is an existent. It will have either to be one or many. If it is one, then it is a quantity or a continuum or a magnitude or a body. Whatever of these it is, it will be divisible. These are all divisible. If it is a body it will have height, breadth and depth. We cannot deny that any of these can be predicated of the existent. Since that is so, the existent is not one. Nor can it be many. For if it is many, it is an aggregate of parts and pieces; just as it would be divisible into portions if it were one. So it can neither be one nor many.

If both the existent and non-existent exist, they both have the same status in respect of being. The former is not more of a being than the latter. This means that if non-existence exists, existence must be the same as it; that is, existence must not exist. Look at it another way: if existence and non-existence are the same thing, they cannot both exist. If they both exist they cannot be the same thing. So both cannot exist. So we have:

- (a) the non-existent cannot exist
- (b) the existent cannot exist
- (c) both cannot exist.

It looks like a stupendous detonation of Parmenides' assertion that being 'is', not being 'is not'. This is, I believe, what it mainly is, but there are other implications which we shall look at later on. The man who composed these arguments was not merely a talented joker. He was concerned deeply with the problem of being and how we may understand it. He saw that the Eleatic approach was susceptible to complete reversal within the assumptions of Eleaticism. There was for him, as for Protagoras, no *kriterion*, no basis of judgement which could produce true and reliable statements about reality (*Adv. Math.* 7.65). He may have believed that in perception, certain effluences from objects perceived entered the sense organs to produce true impressions

of the external world; but this relic of Empedocles' teaching can hardly have been of prime importance in his own world, where existence was in logical terms incapable of existence, and there was an unmendable crack in every statement that involved 'being'.

Thoughts and the statements (*logoi*) relating to them were also separate from reality. He drew a clear distinction between what is thought and what is; and this can hardly be anything else than a deliberate contradiction of Parmenides' difficult remark that seems to say that 'being and thinking' are the same (D-K; *Parm.* 8, 34-6; Kerferd, 1981, p. 99).

His second argument maintains that if an existent existed, it could not be comprehended. His support of this thesis is complex, and I shall not recount it in detail. Briefly, what concerns us is the difficulty involved in determining the status in reality or being of things that are thought about in the human mind. If things thought about are existent, all the things that happen to be objects of thinking will be real and existent. This will mean such absurdities as flying men and chariots racing over the sea are acceptable existents. In Gorgias' time they were not. If non-existent things can be thought of, existent things cannot be thought of. 'Being thought of' is an attribute that cannot be applied with impartial success to opposites such as existents and non-existents. We find no difficulty in accepting the idea that both real and unreal objects can be thought of, but you will see that in Gorgias' argument the polarised, extreme and dichotomous opposition between the two was entirely exclusive and excluding. They can have no coexistence in the mind, whose operations and contents are subject to the same logic as existence itself.

The third phase of Gorgias' argument maintains that even if you could apprehend an existent, you could not communicate your apprehension to anybody else. Supposing there was in fact an existent and we wanted to inform somebody about it. Our means of expression would be the *logos*, which is a sentence or proposition — or any meaningful and rational verbal construction. There is no other means available but the use of language when we want to talk about our 'existent' to another person.

Now the problem about *logos* is its ontological status. It is not, according to Gorgias, an existent in the same way as the existent it proposes to talk about. In formulating and uttering a *logos* we do not express the existent or reality about which the *logos* intends to communicate. All we express is *logos*. Any meaning the *logos* may have for us has infiltrated into us by means of our perceptions, which are

effluences from objects in the external world. It is these perceptions which illuminate the *logos* rather than the *logos* illuminating reality or existents. Because we have encountered this or that colour or taste by means of our perceptions, we are able to understand *logoi* about them. And even if *logos* were something real, its reality would be different from that of its subject matter.

Gorgias shows here that he is aware of problems involved in 'referring', and that there is a difference in kind between an object and the words we use to describe it. What kind of link there may be between objects and the verbal signs or names that indicate them is discussed in Plato's *Cratylus*, which in its general theme is foreshadowed (Kerferd, 1981, p. 100) by Gorgias' distinction between *logos* and what *logos* tries to describe.

Negative as his philosophy may be, and I take the view that in his essay *On Not Being* we encounter a serious first philosophy and not a concatenation of antilogic squibs; Gorgias argues tenaciously and acutely. He shows understanding of the obstacles to knowledge of reality that does justice to the best traditions of critical thinking. He is not obscurantist. His struggles against the inscrutability of the problem of being are full of vigour and spirit that belie his somewhat pessimistic result. He has a relatively advanced critical metaphysic and epistemology.

Gorgias probably lived long enough for the story of his reaction to Plato's dialogue, the *Gorgias*, to have some credibility. 'How well Plato satirises!' he is supposed to have remarked (Athenaeus 505d). There was no reason for him to be particularly dissatisfied with his treatment at Plato's hands, and no doubt his comments reflect amusement rather than irritation. Like Protagoras in the dialogue which bears his name, Gorgias himself appears as a worthy teacher motivated by good intentions which unfortunately can lead to results which fall short of Socrates' dialectical requirements. Yet Gorgias appears as a master of the big set speech and dialectical exchange of arguments. He appears as a teacher who wants to improve his pupils and lead them to virtue, but, as he sees it, his most important function is to teach them how to use *logoi* to persuade others effectively on great issues of politics and social policy. His teaching, by reason of its relative detachment in the scrutiny of moral problems, left an ethical gap which could be occupied by less scrupulous practitioners of his *logos*. His own analysis of the moral responsibility of Helen in his speech about her, frees her from guilt, and tends to make her seem to be the product of social and psychological forces rather than being responsible for what she did.

Gorgias describes his *Helen* as a *paignion*, a piece of light amusement, rather than a serious work; but the diminution of Helen's individual responsibility that we see in his argument of her cause is implicit in his use of logoi as agents of persuasion, his lack of faith in them as instruments for the discovery of reality. His brilliance in analysis of such issues as that of the responsibility bearing upon Helen for all that followed from her flight to Troy is based upon his command of language and ideas. He can introduce a plausible range of considerations that are external to the individual as a supposed moral agent, and it is almost inevitable that the more we know of pressure upon the individual which the individual may not even be aware of, or if aware, may be unable to control, the less we are inclined to think in terms of guilt and the greater weight we give to the causes of actions rather than responsibility for them.

Yet in another sense he was a prime exponent of responsibility. On the national level his speeches sought to persuade the Greek states to unite against Persia rather than fight against each other. He tried to persuade them to feel guilt at internecine quarrelling. These speeches are an effort at persuasion on a heroic scale. Nor was his aim a completely unrealistic one, for history shows that union against Persia was eventually achieved, though it was by Macedonian force rather than persuasion that it came about.

Aristotle mentions the poetic quality of his style but does not approve it (Ar. *Rhet.* 1404a, 24). Only the naïve still admire it, he says. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a critic who lived in the first century BC, regards his manner of expression as overblown and dithyrambic. There are other unfavourable opinions. Yet his influence upon his own age, and posterity, cannot be overestimated. His poetic expression, for example his description of vultures as 'living tombs', is reminiscent of Aeschylean boldness, an archaic baroque which had lost favour in poetry but which Gorgias decided to apply to prose speech-making. Stylistic features which influenced centuries of oratory are attributed to his ingenuity. These, at first striking and elaborate in the opinion of many of their hearers, eventually became the classical style of European oratory. Most obvious is antithesis (Ar. *Rhet.* 1409b, 32 ff; *Rhet. Alex.* 1435b, 27 ff), the placing in relation to each other of opposed ideas. This figure of style may have owed something of its origins to the view expressed by Protagoras that two opposed logoi can be made on any subject (Kennedy, 1963, pp. 65-7) or even to the more remote philosophical influence of Herodotus, or more clearly, that of his teacher Empedocles (Untesteiner, 1954, p. 200). The

opposition that is involved in dialectical argument may have had its influence in the development of this rhetorical usage, but perhaps we should say that both it and dialectic were born of the liking for argument and competition; that agonistic pattern which is found in Greek law courts and politics and drama. Antithesis owes its deliberate and emphatic application in rhetorical teaching and practice to Gorgias. Diodorus Siculus (12.54.3) who wrote in the time of Caesar and Octavian, disapproves of what he regards as artificiality in Gorgias. He mentions in addition to antithesis, Gorgias' use of clauses of similar length (*isokolon*), parallelism in the grammatical shape of clauses (*parison*), ending clauses with words of similar termination (*homoioteleuton*). Cicero, whose life overlapped that of Diodorus, describes these phenomena in his *Orator* 175. They may well have been over-employed in the rich Asianic tradition of rhetoric in the centuries between Gorgias and Cicero, but it is no trivial tribute to Gorgias that Cicero's speeches provide us with many aptly used examples of them.

Prodicus

Prodicus of Ceos was a contemporary of Gorgias and Socrates. The *Suidas* records that on the basis of earlier authorities he was the pupil of Protagoras, with whom he is associated in Plato's *Protagoras*, and that he was a physical philosopher and Sophist.

We need have no doubts about enrolling him in the latter profession; but evidence of his interest in physical nature is slight and doubtful. The fact that he is designated a natural scientist (*meteorosophistes*) in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (360 ff) is not conclusive proof of his scientific interests. The *Suidas* tells us that Prodicus was executed in Athens by a draught of hemlock on the charge of corrupting the young, but there is hardly any question that this is a confusion of Prodicus with Socrates, the kind of error that occasionally occurs in the *Suidas'* generally useful entries. Kerferd (1981, p. 45) refers to the passage in the pseudo Platonic *Eryxias* 398e, 11-399b which says that Prodicus was expelled from the gymnasium in Athens for speaking in an improper fashion before young men, and he infers that Prodicus' sceptical attitudes to the gods may have brought him into conflict with the Athenians. This, Kerferd suggests, may be the underlying source of the garbled story in the *Suidas*. I think this has considerable plausibility.

Some typical mannerisms of the major Sophists are to be found in

the accounts of Prodicus' way of life. He was fond of money; he liked to live in some style; and was something of an exhibitionist like Protagoras, Gorgias and Hippias, who were all skilled at a self advertisement which we can as reasonably attribute to business necessity as to personal vanity. He was a serious and useful practitioner of what we may excusably call an ancient form of 'linguistic analysis', and he is best known for his insistence on the correctness of words or names. His particular style of teaching on this topic strongly influenced Socrates, who was not at all hesitant to declare himself a follower of Prodicus (*Prot.* 341a, 4).

Like Protagoras and Gorgias, he gave exhibition speeches (*epideixeis*) and lessons to smaller groups and individuals. In the *Protagoras* we find him holding forth in a voice of low, deep tones in a small room that resonates his words into incomprehensibility. We may note in passing that unless they were making great speeches at major festivals, Sophists taught where they could, usually in somebody's house, sometimes in an unsuitable room or perambulating round the court of their host's house like Protagoras in Plato's dialogue. It was Plato who first established a permanent location for his school. As ambassador from Ceos, Prodicus had addressed the Athenian Council (*boule*) and was judged to be very able, but hard to hear (*Vit. Soph.* 12). He was a shrewd businessman, anxious to acquire pupils amongst the young of the most distinguished and wealthy families in Athens. Friends were persuaded to help him meet with desirable prospects. Xenophon's *Symposium* 4.62. provides us with an example: 'I know,' says Socrates, 'that you, Antisthenes, procured Callias here for the sophist Prodicus, when you saw that the former was mad about philosophy and the latter needed the money.' A similar example of promising pupils being passed on by Socrates to Prodicus or other Sophists occurs in *Theaetetus* 151b. It was evidently an accepted custom, but one that was regarded with some amusement: the language of marriage arrangements, seduction and procuring was humorously employed in connection with it. Prodicus offered courses at different price levels, and this is the subject of joking by Plato's Socrates in *Cratylus* 384b. In his *Rhetoric* 1415b, 12, Aristotle says that it is a prudent thing for a speaker, when he notices drowsiness or inattention in his audience, to throw in one or two samples from his expensive fifty-drachma course to revitalise them.

Amongst Prodicus' distinguished array of pupils were Isocrates, who was also taught by Gorgias and Tisias (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Isocrates* 1); Euripides (Aulus Gellius 15.20, 4) who was also influenced by the physical philosophy of Anaxagoras; and Theramenes (scholiast

on Aristophanes' *Clouds* 361), the oligarchic politician whose tricky adroitness earned him the nickname of 'Cothurnos' (boot for either foot). An editor of biographical material about Thucydides in the time of Justinian, called Marcellinus, mentions that the eminent historian was influenced by Prodicus' subtle analysis of the meanings of words (*Thucydides* 36). This seems obvious, but it is interesting to have it confirmed in a compilation which depends on some old and respectable sources. Callias we have mentioned, though he was more significant as a wealthy patron than as a participant in his city's political life. Socrates can hardly have been a pupil in the regular paying sense of the term.

When Xenophon was a prisoner of war in Boeotia during the Peloponnesian war, he used to negotiate special paroles for himself in order to have liberty to attend Prodicus' lectures (*Vit. Soph.* 1.12). To this eager hearer of Prodicus we owe the preservation of much of the contents of an important work, the *Horai* (Seasons). Xenophon included a considerable portion of it in his *Memorabilia Socratis* 2.1, 21-39. The scholiast on Aristophanes' *Clouds* 361, mentions the *Horai* as extant in his time (or that of his source). It must have survived some centuries after Prodicus' lifetime.

We do not know at what stage of Prodicus' career the *Horai* was composed. The scholiast is certainly accurate in his summary: Heracles meets Virtue (*Arete*) and Vice (*Kakia*) and after conversing with them, decides to associate with *Arete* and undertake the tasks that this association involves. The following account of the argument is a summary, not a translation:

When Heracles emerged from boyhood and became a young man, the stage of life when people either turn to the way of vice or of virtue, he went into the wilderness to think out which road to take.

Two tall women appeared and seemed to approach him: one very beautiful and elegant, modest both in dress and expression, with no trace of slavishness about her; the other was of sensual appearance, with a lot of cosmetics, a semi-transparent dress and a far from modest demeanour. She kept looking at herself, looking round to see if others were looking at her, and looking at her own shadow.

This woman quickened her pace and came up to Heracles offering him every kind of pleasure: no toil [*ponos*] and the lifelong prospect of living off the work of other people. She says she is called Happiness or Evil [*Eudaimonia* or *Kakia*].

The other one, *Arete*, speaks to him. She tells him she knows

his ancestors and stock and 'If you follow my way,' she says, 'you will become a benefactor of the human race. You will bring distinction to me. I will tell you the truth and will not deceive you: no real good is given by the gods to humanity without toil and anxiety. The same rule applies in all relationships: whether with gods, friends, your city or Hellas in general: it is a question of give and take, and you only get what you yourself give. If the earth is to produce its crops, it needs careful cultivation: the raising of cattle also demands work: war requires the acquisition of martial arts, and if the human body is to be strong and healthy, it must be exercised.'

'Arete is promising you nothing but hard times,' says Kakia. 'I can lead you a much easier and shorter road.'

'You don't even want to conceive a desire before you fulfil it,' Arete says to her. 'You encourage luxury, lassitude and sleep because you have no work to do, and you train people in sensuality and vice. You may be immortal, but the gods have made you an exile from their company: human beings despise you and nobody can trust you. The people you lead end in desiccated misery, completely dissatisfied with their lives. On the other hand I associate with gods and good people. I am the patroness of craftsmen, good actions, the guardian of the home and family bonds, a loyal ally in war and peace. People under my protection sleep peacefully: better than those who have done no work and allow sleep to interfere with the performance of their duties. My people have moderate enjoyments, not luxuries for which they have not worked. The young are encouraged by praise from the old and the old receive proper honour from the young. They remember the great achievements of men of the past, and they enjoy the work that comes to them in the present. Because of me they are on friendly terms with the gods, are loved by their friends and honoured in their native place. When their fated death comes, they are not forgotten: their glorious memory remains fresh and flourishing.'

There is no doubt as to which of the two ways Heracles chooses. He became the hero of great toils (*ponoi*) and the benefactor of man. The theme of moral choice is old, probably older than the story of Paris and the choice he made between Aphrodite, Hera and Athene, but here it is employed for moral protreptic. Arete's assumptions about the condition of man are much the same as Hesiod's: work and skill are necessary for survival, but need not be without honour. On the contrary, achievement brings glory and remembrance. Every achievement

involves skill, and skill has to be learned by hard practice. It is a work ethic which is perfused with the characteristic Greek virtue of moderation. Self-indulgence negates any prospect of achievement. I wonder if Prodicus has in view the riotous self-indulgence of Alcibiades in his worst phases of waywardness, or Critias or Theramenes? If he had, we would have a clearer notion of when it was composed; but we must be cautious. Kakia's influence is to be found at all times and everywhere. It has no date.

Toil (ponos) was not regarded as virtuous or admirable in good Athenian society; but neither was self-indulgence. The craftsman was not idealised; his functions were associated with the word *banausia*, crude mechanical toil. Here we see him representing continuity and creative good order, and we may be reminded of Socrates' continued use of craftsmen and their activities as examples in philosophical arguments. Ponos points forward further than Socrates to Antisthenes and the Cynic philosophers, who regarded Heracles as a patron hero and his life of hardship as an ideal to be revered. The message of Plato's Socrates, and Xenophon's, is that sacrifice of self-interest is virtuous and that the individual fulfils himself in the pursuit of virtue. It is a theme of which we shall have more to say in the chapters that deal with Socratics and Cynics.

I should draw attention to two points of resemblance between the *Horai* and the dialogues of Plato. First is the use of *mythos* to convey arguments and ideas; second the dialogue form, which, though stilted in comparison with Plato's powerful style, seems less artificial when compared with the texture of Xenophon's Socratic works. In a sense what we confront in the *Horai* is a primitive stage in the development of the philosophical dialogue, the evolutionary antecedent of Plato's dialogues; also those of Xenophon and the *Sokratikoi Logoi* of Aischines and other writers. Plato's *Symposium* has two personified abstractions *Poros* and *Penia*, Surplus and Deficit, in one of the speeches which it contains. Perhaps he is deliberately introducing an old fashioned non-naturalistic quaintness reminiscent of old fifth-century techniques in the use of *mythos*. Remember the personified Force and Violence, *Kratos* and *Bia*, who were Zeus' agents in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*. The antithetical convention between *Arete* and *Kakia* contains commonplaces of rhetoric and dialectic, developments of the kind of opposed statements on one point that we see briefly set forth in the fifth-century-BC treatise *Dissoi Logoi*. But more than this we are reminded of the *agon* between the Just and Unjust Logos in Aristophanes' *Clouds*.

I have mentioned Marcellinus' statement that Prodicus' care about the accuracy of words, his *akribologia*, influenced the style of Thucydides, the historian of the Peloponnesian war. Protagoras, Hippias and Alcidas were all concerned with the correctness of the words which named objects. This was a recognised characteristic of Sophists as early as 422 BC when Aristophanes' *Clouds* was produced, though the passage on 'correctness' in that play (lines 650 ff) is more interested in Protagoras' grammatical study of gender than the fitness of words to their meaning. By the time we get to 405 BC we find a reference to the correctness of names (*orthotes ton onomaton*) in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 1181 (Guthrie, 1969, p. 205) which may represent a catchphrase or slogan, the status attributed to *orthoepia* and *orthotes onomaton* by Classen (1959, p. 216). In the case of Prodicus there are clear indications that his preoccupation with the correctness of names was of much greater importance than a wishful declaration. Plato provides us with, I think, reliable evidence about his interest in words which were near synonyms, but nevertheless nicely distinguishable in meaning. In the *Protagoras* a somewhat stiff speech is given by 'Prodicus' which suggests, possibly in a way characteristic of the man himself, decent compromise and a softening of opposed attitudes in order that the discussion can go on. He wants Socrates and Protagoras to *debate* (*amphisbetein*) not to wrangle (*erizein*). He maintains that he and others are *common* but not *equal* hearers of both sides (*Prot.* 337a f). The distinction between *learning* and *understanding* that causes so many difficulties in Plato's *Euthydemus* provides an occasion for referring to Prodicus' views about verbal correctness. *Laches* (197b) *brave* is carefully distinguished from *fearless*, the latter can simply mean a stolid lack of apprehension. Nicias makes this distinction which startles the honest Laches, to whom Socrates says:

Don't say anything [in reply] Laches; for I don't think you've grasped that he has got this subtlety from our friend Damon [a friend and adviser of Pericles], and Damon associates a lot with Prodicus, who has the repute of being cleverest of all the Sophists at distinguishing words like this [from each other]. (*Laches* 197d)

Now many of Socrates' arguments in Plato's dialogues depend upon his capacity to sort out the meanings of words and groups of words that seem to have the same or similar meanings, in his search for the meaning of one special word or group of words. He is more interested in the *logos*, the descriptive group of words, than the *onoma*, the single

word or name. Plato implies here that Prodicus has made a contribution to a dialectical practice that in this instance is deployed by Nicias. It is, of course, most frequently used by Socrates. As we have seen, the debt is acknowledged by Plato's Socrates at *Protagoras* 341a and *Meno* 96d, 7 when he says he is Prodicus' pupil. We may notice that the distinguishing of words from each other (*to onomata diairein*) seems to foreshadow the classification of logoi by division (*diaeresis*) that is a feature of Platonic-Socratic dialectic in its mature stage. Prodicus may therefore be considered as having contributed substantially to the formation of the dialectical style of Plato's dialogues.

Another recently discovered view of his has a significance in the area of dialectic. A fourth-century-AD papyrus commentary on *Ecclesiastes* happens to mention Prodicus, and it attributes to him the paradoxical view 'it is impossible to contradict'. This was also attributed to Protagoras, and it can be argued to fit in with his man-metron doctrine. Prodicus was a pupil of Protagoras, and it is reasonable to suppose, if the papyrus attribution is correct, that Prodicus took over *ouk estin antilegein* from his teacher (Binder and Liesenborghs, 1967).

The passage of commentary — it is by a certain Didymus in the fourth century AD — goes on to say that when people contradict, they are admittedly both speaking, but only one of them can be speaking the truth, and they cannot both be speaking about the same thing. Only one of them is really saying anything; the other is not. Hence there is no real contradiction.

We cannot be incontrovertibly certain that the explication of the passage genuinely gives us Prodicus' view. If it does, it might suggest that he thought there was some accessible criterion whereby the truth of a statement could be tested. However, it must remain doubtful to what extent Prodicus' view of this question agreed or disagreed with that of Protagoras. Perhaps it is safer to assume that all we have here is a diluted latter-day summary of ordinary Protagorean doctrine. The incompleteness of our knowledge of Protagoras' doctrines enhances our difficulty. For a more positive interpretation of the fragment see Kerferd (1981, p. 89 ff).

According to Cicero (*De Oratore* 3. 128) and Galen (*De Elementis* 1.9) Prodicus wrote *On the Nature of Man*. Galen's reference is extensive enough only to indicate that Prodicus recommended certain changes in descriptive terminology relating to phlegm and mucus. Whether his interests in physical nature extended beyond man, or whether his writings in this subject dealt with anything more than the emendment of descriptive terms, the state of the evidence does

not permit us to know. Cicero says Prodicus wrote on *rerum natura*, 'the nature of things', or what we would call physics, but the reference is composite, attributing works on the subject to Thrasyarchus and Protagoras as well; so little can be deduced from it. Let us remember, anyway, that Aristophanes called him a 'meteorosophist'.

The Epicurean writer Philodemus mentions in his book *On Piety* that according to Persaeus (a pupil of Zeno the Stoic) Prodicus thought that foodstuffs and various other useful things were originally given honour as gods by early man, and to this list later were added the names of great inventors of benefits for the species. The sun, moon, rivers and springs were also thought by him to have been made into gods, as the Egyptians think the Nile is a god (Sextus Empiricus, 9.18). No doubt this rationalism would be sufficient to involve him in trouble with the Athenians.

Prodicus' influence was significant in the formation of Platonic-Socratic dialectic. For that alone he deserves to be considered a Sophist of considerable importance. For the rest, he leaves an impression of a vigorous and original thinker, not so radical or inventive as Protagoras; not so impressive a personality as Gorgias, but one who made a solid contribution to the advance towards philosophy, and was both shrewd at his business and of amiable demeanour. It is impossible to avoid the impression that Plato found him slightly ridiculous.

Hippias

Hippias of Elis was approximately Socrates' contemporary. The *Suidas* tells us he wrote many books and that his aim was self-sufficiency: *autarkeia*. It was not the austere *autarkeia* of Antisthenes, Diogenes and other members of the Cynic movement whom we shall discuss later. It was the independence of virtuosity not self-denial. Plato tells us that Hippias appeared at the Olympic festival, a favoured show-place for Sophists, arrayed in clothes and ornaments all of which he had made himself, including even his strigil, a delicately engraved ring, and a woven Persian belt of great intricacy (Plato, *Hippias Minor* 368b).

He claimed to have intellectual command over many areas of knowledge. His conversation and exhibition speeches dealt with geometry, astronomy, musical science (*mousike*), painting and sculpture. His memory was so powerful that with the aid of a mnemonic technique which he had devised, he was able even in his old age to repeat fifty

words in the order in which they were spoken to him. Plato in his *Hippias Major* (285b) implies that Hippias was skilled in the analysis of words and letters, attributing individual powers to the various letters and syllables, and that he was knowledgeable about rhythms and harmonies; but that people preferred to hear him on genealogy and chronology. In these intellectual provinces of the traditional wise man he seems to have been responsible for advances that are amongst his principal claims to distinction.

He was a polymath, and if we believe Plato, whom we have no grounds to distrust on this point, he was somewhat vain. He was a Dorian, and had great fame in Dorian cities. His style as a speaker was rich but not over-elaborate, and he did not indulge excessively in the use of poetic words. Elis employed him as ambassador on many missions, and he combined his diplomatic duties with the profitable speech-making and teaching of a Sophist (*Vit. Soph.* 1.11). His daughter Rathane is said to have married Isocrates.

As well as an orator, he was, like other Sophists, a dialectician. He was also a poet; we hear of the elegy he composed on the boy choir of Rhegium which was lost at sea on a journey to the Olympic festival. This poem, alas, is as lost as its subjects. Another work which we desiderate is the *Troikos Dialogos* in which Nestor offers his ancient wisdom to Neoptolemus, the son of the dead Achilles, at the end of the Trojan war. Nestor gives the young man good advice on how he should conduct his life. We do not know any more about the contents. Perhaps they were not dissimilar to the remarks attributed to him in the fragments of Plutarch's essay on slander, which are preserved by Stobaeus (fifth century AD) (3.38, 32 and 3.38, 42). We find that Hippias is supposed to have maintained that there are two species of envy: the just envy which is aroused at honour given to the unworthy, and the unjust envy which is irritated when good men get the honour they merit. Envious men suffer twofold misery: not only are they grieved by their own misfortunes, but by the good luck of others. Hippias is also reported to have complained at the absence of legislated punishment for slander of the kind that is prescribed by society for thieves. Slanderers steal friendship from a person, the most precious possession there is; violent assault is less unjust than this, for at least it is visible and in the open (unlike slander). These seem to be themes consonant with the situation of an old Nestor advising a young Neoptolemus. They are in harmony also with the picture we have of Hippias as being a decent, if somewhat self-important, character. I find little to suggest that his subtle, resilient and well-schooled mind

had much creative power or that he generated important new ideas. However, there are differing opinions on this point.

There is a suggestion that Hippias had a theory of being: that he regarded reality as a kind of continuum in which it was impossible that something could be said of one of two things only without being predicated of the other (Kerferd, 1981, pp. 47-8). The passage in which this view is supposed to emerge is *Hippias Major* 301b. The passage is not included in Diels collection of Presocratic fragments (D-K, 1952); it is not his only example of omission in the case of Hippias (Kerferd, 1981, p. 47). Diels and his successor Kranz possibly did not think the passage was sufficient testimony of a first philosophy.

According to Plato's dialogue, Hippias meets the analytical thrust of Socrates' questions by challenging the whole underlying assumptions of this kind of dialectic: namely, that division of words and meanings by question was a valid proceeding related to the reality of things.

The fact is that you, Socrates, and also the people you customarily talk to, do not see the whole of reality. In your arguments you keep on separating and isolating the *beautiful* and every individual thing of the things that are realities. You are unaware of the great and continuous natural bodies of reality. You are unaware of them even to this extent, that you attribute validity to some being or notion that relates at the same time to both of two things, but not to each of the two, or to each of the two separately, but not to both together. To such an extent is your thinking illogical, imperceptive, simplistic and lacking in insight. (*Hippias Major* 300d-301b)

Socrates ironically begs pardon for his misapprehension that he and Hippias were separate beings.

In estimating this passage, we should bear in mind that it is Hippias' response to Socrates' point about individual differences of view on the question of what is regarded as beautiful. Hippias says to him that he will never find it to be the case, that both of them have an impression which neither of them have as individuals. Socrates, in response to this, takes the view that each of them is capable of forming an impression which the both of them do not hold to be the case; and that both can form an impression that was true of neither of the two of them as individuals (300d-301b).

I regard the passage as antilogical, almost eristic in tone rather than presenting a serious philosophy of being. Hippias' argument hinges upon the use of Greek words specifically meaning 'both of two'

(*amphoterai*) and 'each of two sets' (*hekateroi heteroi*). The words have strong correlative bonds of meaning in their ordinary use, and this provides the adhesive for Hippias' argument that of both (two together), neither (of two together) can be regarded as separate in any respect. Leaving aside the problem, which is not pertinent to the argument of Hippias, that he and Socrates are talking somewhat indiscriminately about existent 'beings' and impressions — you can lump both together under the heading 'predicables' if you wish — I still can see no attempt here on Plato's part to represent Hippias as propounding a general theory of the continuity of nature. He may be alluding to some such view, but there can be no certainty. We know that Hippias was interested in Thales. Diogenes Laertius I. 24 mentions that both Aristotle (*De Anima* 405a, 19) and Hippias say that Thales thought that even lifeless and inanimate things possessed souls, and that he based his view on the electrically attractive properties of magnets and amber. This continuity of life may have influenced Hippias' own thinking; so also may the underlying continuum implied by Thales' theory that everything was ultimately composed of water. But we cannot prove this, nor can we entertain any firm view on the question whether Hippias possessed the text of Thales' book, if indeed Thales wrote one (Barnes, I, 1979, pp. 13, 313 n. 12).

What we are sure about is something which I believe has much more relevance to the passage from Plato's dialogue which is quoted above; and this is the fact that Hippias was a skilled and wily practitioner of dialectic. We are dealing with a man who in Plato's account of him — and the words are put in Hippias' own mouth — never met anybody at the Olympic gatherings whom he could not match in argument (*Hippias Minor* 363c). Here in the passage from *Hippias Major* we find him outfaced by Socrates' penetrating, selective questions, and responding with a bold attempt to attack the foundations of Socrates' technique of analytical enquiry by suggesting it is out of alignment with a truth which involves continuity of being rather than the splitting up of things into classes. Hippias' throw for victory consists of an attack upon the relevance of the dialectical games which he has been content enough to play up to this point. If he cannot win the game he will try to overturn the board. I think this passage is more suggestive evidence of Plato's opinion of Hippias' skill in argument than of his holding of a theory of continuous being.

In Plato's *Protagoras*, Hippias is introduced making a speech (337c) after that of Prodicus. Like the latter's speech, it may be taken as caricature which, like the best of its kind, is no negligible guide to

actuality. Hippias appears in his speech as a pompous and self-satisfied character, but he also is an advocate of reasonableness between the main characters of the dialogue. He bases his advocacy upon the currently important distinction between what is natural or by nature (*physei*) and what is maintained by agreement, law, or convention (*nomoi*).

Gentlemen here present, I think that you are kindred and connected and fellow citizens all of you, by nature not convention. Like is akin to like by nature, not by convention. Convention tyrannises over man enforcing many things contrary to nature. (*Prot.* 337c)

This is the text of his sermon. He goes on to praise the wisdom of those present, the distinction of Athens as the home of philosophy, the house which is giving them hospitality and patronage. He beseeches Socrates and Protagoras not to follow the rigid rules of the style of argument each prefers, but to take a middle path.

This has been regarded as indicating Hippias' views on the power of nature to break down artificial barriers between people (Guthrie, 1969, pp. 118, 162). Hippias emphasises the kinship by nature of those who are present from the different quarters of Greece, and here also he is more an advocate of nature than convention. He is represented by Xenophon as questioning the identification of justice with strict observance of law (*nomos*) (*Mem.* 4. 4, 12 ff; Guthrie, 1969, pp. 118-19). Yet it seems to me difficult to read in this passage a demonstration of a deeply rooted humane philosophy. I think he is using that familiar theme of fifth-century-BC philosophical debate, *nomos/physis*, as a rhetorical image recommending moderation. His main object is to persuade Socrates and Protagoras to carry on reasonably. It is not to expound philosophy. Of course, Plato would hardly make him say things wildly unrepresentative of his real opinions: there would be no amusement or intellectual profit in that. Yet I am sure we should see no more here than a satirical representation of Hippias' manner and his preference for *physis*. We have no evidence that he was a harsh or inhumane character from any of our sources. But we should be careful not to over-interpret this passage or regard it as carrying more weight than it can properly bear. Hippias need not be enrolled amongst the great benefactors of humanity, but should not be ridiculed for his ineligibility.

Yet he can be credited with positive achievements of no trifling order. He was a truly profound scholar in the history and names of

early tribes. It is recorded that one of his books, *Ethnon Onomasiai* (Nomenclatures of Peoples), was devoted to this subject. He had a comprehensive grasp of the origins of various cities and the colonisation that had taken place. According to Philostratus (*Vit. Soph.* 1. 11) this erudition recommended him to the Spartans, who found in some of his information expedient support for their foreign policy. Another work briefly quoted by Athenaeus 13, 608 ff, is the *Synagoge*, a collection of various pieces of information. Athenaeus' reference to it consists of an anecdotal oddity concerning a woman of Miletus called Thargelia who was married fourteen times: a person of beauty and character, she had great influence in a number of cities and upon their rulers, and so made many distinguished marriages. It has been argued with some plausibility that we should attach to the *Synagoge* an apparently more illuminating reference to Hippias in the second century AD by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* 'Selections' 6.15). This passage mentions Hippias quoting from a range of authors, Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer, and other poets and writers, Greek and non-Greek. If the attribution of this passage – unattributed by Clement – to the *Synagoge* is correct, it would make this work of Hippias' more important and seminal than it seems; for it would suggest that it was an early doxography, or collection of the opinions of a range of eminent men on given questions. We owe much of what we know about Presocratic philosophers to doxographic material from Aetius (fifth century AD) which contains traces of much earlier information. The usual view has been that Aristotle was the initiator of doxography, followed by his pupil Theophrastus. But it has been suggested that our information about Thales' water theory comes from doxographic work of Hippias (Kerferd, 1981, pp. 48-9).

I remain somewhat doubtful whether this has been proved. Certainly Hippias' memory was prodigious, and he was in an important sense one of the earliest scholars in our Western tradition. Possibly he can be regarded as our earliest historian of the prosopographical school that is concerned with the records and careers of individuals. He knew that Mamercus, the brother of Stesichorus (seventh/sixth century BC) was an expert in geometry (Proclus, *On Euclid* fg. 65, 11). He wrote a table of Olympic victors (*Anagraphe*) which was used by Thucydides. He is said to have opined that Lycurgus, the legendary Spartan law-giver, was an active warrior. His great interest was in items of information and their collection. The character of his intellect, as far as we can infer it from available evidence, may have leaned towards the organisation of opinions of other men under various headings.

Not only was he aware of the history of geometry as his knowledge of Mamercus witnesses, he was supposed to have been an inventive mathematician in his own right. Proclus (*On Euclid* p. 272) says that he discovered the quadratrix, the curve used in the trisection of angles. It may be that he left a written account of the mathematical operations that led to this discovery (Kerferd, 1981, p. 48 on Proclus p. 356, a reference not included in Diels-Kranz).

He could have been an original thinker in mathematics, and it is unfortunate that we know so little of his mathematical studies. He can hardly be considered as an innovative thinker in other areas.

He stands out as a decent and respectable man, but not as a great ethical thinker. His prominence as a Sophist is that of the polymath who taught well in a number of subjects and who was as expert as any other of the great Sophists in the skill of projecting his personality. Plato mentions him with the great Sophists Gorgias and Prodicus (*Apol.* 19e). So may we.

Thrasymachus

Thrasymachus from Chalcedon in Bithynia is first mentioned in Aristophanes' *Daiteleis* (Banqueters). In a quotation from this fragmentary comedy he is referred to as the type of quibbling rhetorician (Galen, *Hippocratic Glosses* 19.66 k). The *Daiteleis* was produced in 427 BC, and this shows that Thrasymachus was an established figure in the Athenian consciousness even before Gorgias. No doubt he was already reasonably of mature age at this time. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the distinguished literary critic (first century BC) seems to believe he was younger than Lysias, who was born somewhere about 459 BC (*Lysias* 6). Notable amongst Thrasymachus' great public speeches is one on behalf of the people of Larisa, who were threatened by Archelaus of Macedon. Since Archelaus came to power in 413 BC, the speech cannot antedate this year. We do not know how long Thrasymachus lived after this approximately ascertainable date in his career. The suggestion that he committed suicide comes only from a late and imprecise source, a scholiast on Juvenal *Satire* 7, 203. Juvenal says that 'many have regretted the barren emptiness of professorial status, as the death of Thrasymachus proves'. The scholiast says 'this refers to an Athenian orator who hanged himself'. Thrasymachus, it is fair to say, gives an impression of intensity and suffering pessimism in the fragments of his writings and in the portrait of him which appears in the first book of

Plato's *Republic*. These factors may have given rise to the story that he killed himself. In any case, we cannot prove that he did not do so.

He was principally a rhetorician and a teacher of rhetorical style. Cicero says that he, Prodicus and Protagoras also wrote and spoke about the physical nature of the universe (*Orator* 3. 32, 128). However, Cicero is speaking about typical sophistic claims to be able to deal with any subject (Guthrie, 1969, p. 46). Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Isaeus* 20) thinks well of his style, which is accurate argumentative oratory at its best. Thrasymachus is between the same meritorious brackets as Antiphon, Polycrates and Critias. He is inventive, powerful, clear and precise in expression. All surviving speeches of Thrasymachus, he tells us, are epideictic; none of his work for law courts survives. Thrasymachus favoured the architectural organisation of sentences into complex balanced forms called *periodoi* and he attached great importance to the rhythm of his expressions. In his speech for the people of Larisa, he adapts a line from Euripides' play *Telephus*: 'Shall we as Greeks be slaves to mere barbarians?' (Fg. 719 Nauck) from its iambic rhythm to the cretic metre which he preferred for prose style: 'Can Greeks be slaves to barbarous Archelaus?'

We have the names of several of his writings. *Symbouleutikoi Logoi* seem to be his important set speeches in specific causes. He wrote a textbook on style and oratory, *Techne Rhetorike*, also a selection of light pieces, 'jokes', called *Paignia*. These are mentioned in the *Suidas*, together with 'Basic Materials for Speeches', *Rhetorikai Aphormai*. A scholion on Aristophanes' *Birds* 880 mentions the *Megale Techne* (Big Text Book) which may possibly be the same as the *techne* that occurs in the *Suidas* list. The *Megale Techne* is likely to have contained the *Rhetorikai Aphormai*, *Prooimia* (Introductions) for speeches (Athenaeus 10, 416e); *Eleoi* (Laments) were pathetic passages aimed at arousing sympathetic emotions in his hearers (Ar. *Rhet.* 1404a). According to Plato in his *Phaedrus* (167c-d), Thrasymachus was expert in the art of stimulating tears of pity to arise in the eyes of his hearers by means of his brilliant description of poverty and old age. Hermeias (Alexandria, fifth century AD) in his commentary on this part of the *Phaedrus* confirms the point. Thrasymachus' mastery of this *topos* or commonplace evidently was unusual even for a great professional rhetor. He was not alone in being able to move his hearers' pity. It is also recorded of Prodicus, Hippias and Protagoras (Quintilian, *Institutis Oratoria* 3.1.12). Aristotle suggests (Ar. *Rhet.* 1404a) that Thrasymachus in his *Eleoi* came near to providing a text book on dramatic techniques for orators. The *Eleoi* should certainly form a section of

his 'Big Text Book'; so also should the *Hyperballontes* or 'knock-down' arguments. In an essay on subjects for conversation at dinner parties (*Quaestiones Conviviales* 616d), Plutarch says a host should have available a copy of Aristotle's *Sophistici Elenchi* and Thrasy-machus' *Hyperballontes* which could provide suitable material to get conversation going. The pairing of these two works may lead us to suppose that Thrasy-machus' *Hyperballontes* was a bundle of logical puzzles and fallacies not unlike Aristotle's work. If so, the *Hyperballontes* could be a fitting section or chapter in a big book on rhetoric.

Most of our information about his thought as distinct from his rhetorical virtuosity concerns his attitude to politics and ethics. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Demosthenes* 3) quotes a speech Thrasy-machus made on the subject of the Athenian constitution, in which he looks back with regret upon the old simple ways of life of an earlier less sophisticated, less corrupt generation. The concern with a *patrios politeia*, the self-disciplined and honest political life style of pre-democratic ancestors, began to make itself felt as the fifth century BC approached its last decade with the Athenians in a confusion of disappointment, insecurity and war weariness. Thrasy-machus' speech seems to be addressed to such a mood.

Athenians, I wish I belonged to that ancient time when young people were content to keep quiet, and were not obliged to make speeches by the urgency of events, and when older people administered the city's affairs in a correct fashion. But since destiny has reserved us for a time which is characterised by our having to accept other people's decisions, the ill consequences of which we ourselves have to suffer, and since the most serious of these consequences are attributable neither to the intervention of the gods nor to mere chance, but are the fruits of bad government, one feels obliged to speak out. The man who offers himself continually for the indiscriminate blame of anyone who takes the notion; or who willingly endures incrimination for the treachery and inadequacy of others, is either signally obtuse or possessed of infinite patience. Enough time, in my opinion, has been allowed to go by: instead of having peace, we have war. Continuing perils have brought us to the point where we look with affection on the day that has just ended and look with fear upon the one that is to come. Instead of being at one in our minds, we have fallen into confused conflict with each other. Abundant good fortune makes other people turbulent and outrageous. In our times of success we have behaved with

moderation but we have reacted with madness to setbacks which induce restraint in others. Why then should a man hesitate to speak his mind, especially if he is grieved by present circumstances and thinks he can suggest something that will prevent them from recurring?

First of all I shall prove that those of the politicians and others who are involved in mutual recrimination have become victims of the illusion that necessity attacks those who plunge into irrational competition; under the impression that they are speaking in diametrical opposition to each other, they do not realise that they are actually pursuing the same policy, nor that the argument of the opposing side is implicit in the one that they themselves put forward. Now look from the beginning at the objectives of the two parties. First they are confused about the constitution of our fathers [*patrios politeia*], even though it is very easy to understand, and the thing our fellow citizens all have most in common. Accordingly, whatever was beyond the grasp of our understanding, we should learn from the accounts of our older generation; whatever the older generation have themselves witnessed, we should learn from those who actually saw it happen.

This is a conservative and oligarchic politician's philosophy. Naturally, Thrasymachus, being a foreigner, would not have been allowed to address the Athenian *ekklesia* in person. The speech should be regarded as a species of pamphlet, for circulation and for recitation before chosen audiences. It could have been commissioned by oligarchic interests; there is no reason to believe that Thrasymachus, or any other Sophist, would work for nothing. In the First Book of Plato's *Republic*, where Thrasymachus is resident in Cephalus' house specifically in the role of a professional teacher, he complains at the suggestion that he should be expected to carry on a conversation with Socrates without a fee. Even if the speech was the product of a commission, it is very likely that it contains views that Thrasymachus personally held. Its complaint against democratic chaos and factional strife has an authentic ring. We seem to hear a more sophisticated and elevated version of the *Old Oligarch* whose pamphlet attacked Athenian democratic ways (c. 425 BC). We also have overtones of the complaints voiced by Aristophanes in his comedies against new intellectual and political fashions; also more sombre speeches in Thucydides' history (Guthrie, 1969, p. 223).

One thing we should note. In this surviving passage of Thrasymachus'

speech we perceive no awareness that the activities of Sophists like Thrasymachus himself have contributed in any way to the difficulties which are criticised. Indeed the implication is clear, towards the end of the speech, that a sophistical scrutiny of the logic of their own positions might have led the contending parties to understand that in fact they agreed with each other.

Thrasymachus' speech seems anxious to expose delusion, unawareness, self-deception. This is in keeping with the character that he is made to present in Plato's *Republic*. He will not entertain illusions about justice: justice is nothing more than the interests of the stronger party (*Rep.* 338c), and it is only a fool who thinks otherwise. A quotation from an unidentified work of his quoted by Hermias in a scholion on Plato's *Phaedrus*, 267c, tells us that Thrasymachus wrote that 'the gods pay no attention to human affairs. Otherwise they would not have overlooked justice, the greatest of human goods. For we see that human beings do not use it.'

In Plato's *Republic* Thrasymachus seems brutally committed to the cruel idea that justice represents nothing more than the operation of the ruler's self-interest. He is aggressive and harsh, and it would scarcely be unfair to Plato to say that his Thrasymachus is deliberately drawn as an unlikeable character (Guthrie, 1969, p. 297). If we compare Plato's portrait of him and the hard utterances that issue from his mouth in the *Republic* with the sentiments of this passage from his unknown work, we may feel like conceding that his harsh persona in the *Republic*, which no doubt had some basis in reality, was moulded as much by despair as aggressive anger. Like the sixth-century-BC poet of the *Theognidea* (731-52), and like Euripides in some of his plays, he saw unjust power prevailing everywhere (Barnes, 2, 1980, pp. 151-3). His attitude to the gods seems like that of Epicurus, who found them indifferent to human happiness and suffering; but Epicurus attempted to create an environment in which human notions prevailed and suffering was minimised. Thrasymachus was embittered because he could not accept the inevitability of injustice, the actuality and universal prevalence of which impinged relentlessly upon his consciousness. He was tempted to reconstruct the imaginary time when the *patrios politeia* guided men in better ways.

I think this is borne out by Plato, who, whatever his intentions, attributed to Thrasymachus the fierce phrase about the 'interest of the stronger'. Faults that are punished in the weak lead the strong to achieve tyrannies. We are reminded of the accounts given by Thrasymachus of 'power' prevailing over what would ordinarily be called

'right', for instance in the dialogue between the Athenian aggressors and their Melian victims (Thucydides 5, 85-111) and in the reversal of ordinary values of decency in the revolution at Corcyra (Thucydides 3, 82-4).

These are typical phenomena of the fifth century BC at its cruelest in the great conflict between Athens and Sparta. Fifth-century experience informs Thrasymachus' bitterness, but Plato wants to supercede fifth-century ideas and put something better in their place. Thrasy-machus is therefore set up to argue that justice is really a sham, a mere front for what is extreme injustice, and his raw sociological and historical observation is destined for refutation at the hands of Socrates. Thrasy-machus does not lose sight of the fact that he is propounding a paradox about justice, and that this natural law view of justice being that which advantages the strong at the expense of the weak is not in conformity with anything he or anybody else ordinarily would want justice to mean. Socrates puts a number of questions to him about what he thinks justice really does mean, and with reluctance and anger he allows himself to be led to refutation. Even in defeat, Thrasy-machus does not see the sense of a dialectic which, though it may worst him, does not change the facts of life.

Thrasy-machus' views resemble those of Callicles in the *Gorgias*. Both see a competitive world, merciless and cruel, in which the strong and ruthless win, and the weaker are trampled down. That, in their view, is the natural way of things which is carried on irrespective of human theorising.

Plato and Aristotle take different views of nature, yet the 'naturalism' that made Thrasy-machus bitter did not die out with his generation. It reappears in Antisthenes and the Cynics who were his successors. These also refused to entertain illusions about the human condition.

3 LESS PROMINENT SOPHISTS

Of the individuals discussed in this chapter, only Antiphon makes an original contribution to sophistic philosophy. The others are relatively minor figures, but have the interesting capacity of the less prominent to give background illumination to the movement with which they are connected.

Antiphon

Antiphon is, and most likely will remain, a mystery, but at the same time he is of considerable importance in the history of the intellectual movement which concerns us. The trouble is that there are a number of Antiphons known to us who were approximately contemporary with Socrates. Is Antiphon the Sophist who appears in dispute with Socrates in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (1.6), and composed the work *Aletheia* (On Truth) which has been recovered from papyrus in substantial fragment (*Ox. Pap.* 1364 (1915); *Ox. Pap.* 1797 (1922)), to be identified with the aggressive oligarch and orator Antiphon of Rhamnous whose stormy political career ended with his execution in 411 BC (Thucydides 8.68, 89, 90; Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, 32)? Is Antiphon the tragic dramatist to be identified with either or both? And what about Antiphon who wrote an interpretation of dreams, or the author of the work *Homonoia* (On Concord)?

Antiphon of Rhamnous, an Athenian citizen, has left speeches which were in the form of rhetorical exercises for and against certain propositions. We also have some fragments of his forensic and public oratory. In antiquity and in modern times these have been considered incompatible on grounds of style with the treatise *Aletheia*, and a separation of authorship has been proposed. But the question of stylistic differentiation in the case of Antiphon's works has also been considered irrelevant and indecisive both in antiquity and by modern scholars. J.S. Morrison's authoritative discussion (1961) concludes that we should be thinking not of two or more but of one man of considerable talent and versatility. I am inclined to agree; but I cannot ignore a point that is still mentioned by scholars such as Guthrie (1969, p. 293) and Kerferd (1981, p. 50). This is the contrast between on the one

hand Antiphon's oligarchic reputation in Thucydides, and on the other, the apparent democratic openness of mind in the monograph *On Truth*. Kerferd (1981, p. 50) aptly points out that this conflict also occurs within Antiphon the Sophist (on the certain assumption he wrote *Homonoia*) and not between the 'Sophist' and the 'orator'. Fragments D-K 80 B 61, a quotation from Stobaeus (3.5, 57), stigmatises *anarchia* as the worst evil that can befall mankind. When an ancient author talks about anarchia, he may be taken to mean, unless it is specifically stated otherwise, the absence of order that arises from democratic libertarianism.

Fragment 61 goes on to speak about previous generations being aware of this problem and making sure their children were taught to do what they were told, so that they would not feebly fall victim to proposals for excessive radical changes in society. Like Socrates and Plato, the author is concerned with education as a foundation of social stability and measured change; but he is certainly speaking like an oligarch who is a member of the ruling 'Four Hundred' which limited Athenian democracy in 412-11 BC.

His reputation as a democrat rests, as far as I can see, on his statement in Fragment B of D-K 80 B 44 where he says (approximately):

We give reverence and respect to the children of noble fathers: we neither reverence nor respect the offspring of a humble house. In this we have barbarised ourselves, since by nature we are all alike born to be Greeks and Barbarians (probably the one nature adapts us equally to be Greek or Barbarian as the case may be).

Antiphon goes on to remind us that nature confers various abilities (not birth presumably), and that there is no distinction in natural talent between the races: for we all breathe air, etc.

This scarcely makes Antiphon a democrat. He is an oligarch, conscious of the deficiencies of the traditional aristocracy, with whom, after all, as an oligarch and politician he has to do business day by day. Possibly his own humble origins — his father is reputed in the preface to the manuscripts to his speeches to have been a teacher of writing — sharpened his awareness of the claims that natural talent had to make against noble birth in a snobbish society.

His book *Homonoia* displayed wide interests together with an inventive, humorous, sociological imagination. His imaginary tribes, *Skiaopodes* (Shadow Feet), *Makrocephaloi* (Long Heads), *Troglodytes* (Cave People), could be an invention of Aristophanes or a joke about the strange peoples who turn up in Herodotus.

Perhaps, as has been suggested, *Homonoia* had an anecdotal, informal structure with many proverbs and epigrams woven into it (Guthrie, p. 286). His attempt to square the circle by a process of exhaustion involving the construction of polygons with a progressively increasing number of sides within its circumference was criticised by Simplicius (*Physica* 54, 12) as geometrically naïve, but was treated with some respect by Themistius, a commentator on Aristotle's *Physics* of the fourth century AD (*Physica* 4.2).

Antiphon was interested in the workings of the mind and is said to have developed a *techne alupias*, probably a method or skill rather than a *techne* in the sense of handbook, which was directed towards the relief of anxiety. The source for this is pseudo-Plutarch, *Lives of Ten Orators* 1, p. 833 (87 D-K A 6), and the reference is specifically to Antiphon of Rhamnous. Philostratus mentions that Antiphon the orator had speeches which he used for the relief of anxiety. Antiphon is also said to have set up a clinic or workshop near Corinth for the treatment of anxiety. There is no need to regard such a practice as improbable in the case either of Sophist or orator. The Antiphon who wrote *Aletheia* (On Truth) certainly regarded the mind as the controlling element in the human being and related it closely to health and sickness. Antiphon's work on the interpretation of dreams probably belongs to the same sphere of interest. His aim was not to produce positive happiness in those who sought his advice. He tried to bring about *alupia*, an 'absence of anxiety'. His cautious Greek realism envisaged no better practicable achievement and saw that the absence of anguish was a positive good. Epicurus was later to advocate *ataraxia*, an 'absence of stimulus' rather than the acquisition of a distinct joy, as the philosophically attainable psychological state. To expect more was to expect too much.

Whatever else is attributed to him, Antiphon is most notable for maintaining the prime importance of nature (*physis*) against that of law or convention (*nomos*) in the motivation and conduct of human life.

The following piece of his monograph *Aletheia* indicates his views (87 D-K B 44):

Justice [*dikaiosyne*] is not breaking the laws [*nomima*] of the city where one is a citizen. A human being would treat justice [as defined] in a way most beneficial to himself, if he should hold the laws in high respect when witnesses are present; but when he is on his own and free of witnesses, if he should follow the promptings

of nature. For laws are artificially imposed, and nature's promptings carry the force of necessity. Legal enactments are a matter of what has been agreed and are not natural; nature's demands are of natural growth, not mere matters of agreement.

If a person in transgressing these escapes the notice of those who are party to these agreements, he will be free of guilt and penalty. Of course if he does not evade detection he will not. If a person goes against some requirement of nature — a kind of impossibility — even if he eludes everybody's vigilance, and does this, he still does damage. If everybody sees him, the damage will be no greater. He sustains, however, an injury which is not a matter of opinion, but of truth.

The assumption underlying this passage is that a person will always pursue his own advantage, what is good for him — the term used for beneficial actions in Antiphon's arguments is a medical one, *sympherei*, 'it benefits or is good for you' (Furley, 1981, p. 84). This is a frequent Greek assumption: it emerges in one of Socrates' so called paradoxes. 'Nobody willingly does what is wrong.' Antiphon is unequivocally in favour of nature as a guide to behaviour that has advantages or beneficial effects superior to those of agreed formulae embodied in laws and conventions devised by human beings. Analogous positions are adopted by Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias* and Thrasymachus in the First Book of the *Republic*; but in neither case, even making allowance for the combative atmosphere of a dialogue, is the case for nature as against law or convention stated with such conviction. Here we have something more than the familiar contrast between what people profess to believe and the actions they in fact perform. It is possible that Antiphon in a Parmenidean fashion is concerned here with the distinction between mere opinion and truth or reality (Furley, 1981, p. 83). Consider for instance that he speaks of the real injury, not merely a tactical or socially important disadvantage, that a man may inflict upon himself by acting at variance with the imperative of nature, the prescription physis recommends for his benefit. 'Nature' may represent for Antiphon a level of reality. The work after all is called *Aletheia*, Truth.

At this stage we may ask whether we can make any acceptable statement about Antiphon's views on the reality of things. What was his theory of being? And since theory about the process of knowing is closely linked with what can be known and what there is to know, the question of his theory of knowledge also arises.

I think we may say with some confidence that Antiphon distinguished

between sense perception and thought (Morrison, 1963, p. 42; Guthrie, 1969, p. 202). A textually doubtful, but imperfect quotation of Antiphon in Galen's *Commentary on Hippocrates* 18B, 656K, seems certain at least in its statement that no one single thing is knowable which corresponds with any of the things the acutest observer can see or the subtlest thinker conceive. From this we may minimally deduce that he was troubled by the mutual relationships of thought, perception and reality. In this respectable state of bewilderment he nevertheless attached importance to thought or intelligence (*gnome*) as the leading principle (Galen, *Commentary on Hippocrates*) which exercised ascendancy over the body, and he seems to have developed an interesting range of technical terms to express precisely various grades of perception (D-K 338-9).

The second book of his *Aletheia* seems to have been concerned with cosmogony (Guthrie, 1969, p. 203) and his topics and approach, as far as we can discern them, are reminiscent of the old Ionian natural philosophy. In these fragments I do not believe we are likely to find much clearer information about his theory of being. Furlley (1981) may be on the right path when he mentions a Parmenidean, Eleatic influence. Antiphon certainly did take nature (*physis*) very seriously, and may well have regarded it as a fundamental being or reality.

Callicles

Callicles appears only in Plato's *Gorgias* as the energetic opponent of Socrates' view that it is better to suffer injustice than commit it (*Gorgias* 483a-b) and as a proponent of 'nature' against 'law' or 'convention' as the true and valid motivation of human action individual and social. He is not a Sophist himself; he rejects such people as useless (*Gorgias* 520a); but the way in which he is represented by Plato inserts him amongst their number in an honorary capacity he doubtless would have loathed. His aim is political effectiveness in a democratic context; but his advocacy of the natural claims of the 'better' and stronger in our species as against the social inventions and constructed laws by means of which the weak majority restrain their betters, make him seem like one of nature's oligarchs. It has been suggested that he resembles the portrait of the tyrannical man in Plato's *Republic* 465 ff who espouses democracy's cause and rises to autocratic power on the flood of anarchic permissiveness and selfish individualism that these democratic developments release, with destructive consequences for a

traditional society whose coherence depends greatly upon self-restraint. Plato was keenly aware of the confluence of psychological and social forces that linked *demokratia* and *tyrannis*.

Callicles suggests a 'law of nature', *Gorgias* 483e, a paradoxical phrase in an intellectual context which regarded nature and law (or convention) as strongly opposed. This law of nature is the right of the stronger over the weaker, the right asserted by the Athenians against the people of Melos in Thucydides 5. 106. This view has much in common with Thrasymachus' argument in the first book of Plato's *Republic* (338c) that 'justice is nothing more than what is in the interests of the stronger'. Callicles maintains that in general it is more shameful to suffer than inflict: nature is on the side of those who can inflict: power justifies that which power has the ability to inflict (*Gorgias* 483a-b). What most people regard as justice is not real justice, but merely an agreement amongst the weak. True justice, in his opinion, transcends such nonsense. In this he differs somewhat from Thrasymachus, who regards justice as universally interpretable in terms of raw power, but does not regard power as a higher form of justice. Philosophy is a preoccupation acceptable only in the young, but silly in the old (*Gorgias* 484c.) Socrates, if he goes on talking and thinking so absurdly, is likely to find himself in a dangerous situation (*Gorgias* 486a-b, 511b, etc.).

Is Callicles an historic person or an invention? Plato was capable of inventing a convincing character to state a point of view. But was there any need for such an exercise here? It has been thought that the same Callicles conceals a real person, such as the politician Theramenes. This and many other speculations about Callicles' identity have no footing in historical evidence and now are generally regarded as a waste of time. Plato makes Callicles the host of Gorgias: he is rich and well connected. He is involved in a love affair with Demos, the son of Pyrilampes (*Gorgias* 481b) and Pyrilampes was a friend of Pericles, and became Plato's stepfather. Demos is a name of ironical significance: *demos* means people, and by extension 'democratic party'. On the whole I see no reason to think Callicles was not an authentic person. Perhaps E.R. Dodds (1959, p. 13) is right in his speculation that Callicles' forthright and radical style led him to an early death in the latter turbulent years of the fifth century BC. This would explain why we have no information from other sources about a vivid and intelligent, though potentially ruthless, character.

Critias

Critias was not a Sophist in that he never taught for payment. Indeed he did not teach at all, except through his writings. He is described as a layman amongst philosophers, and a philosopher amongst laymen by the scholiast on Plato's dialogue *Timaeus* (21c) in which he plays a part. Critias was Plato's maternal uncle and the guardian of his cousin, Charmides. In addition to the *Timaeus* he figures in the *Charmides*, the *Protagoras* (the mere mention that he is present in this distinguished gathering is not insignificant) and in the *Critias* in which he is the principal participant.

He died in 403 BC in a conflict between the supporters of the 'Thirty Tyrants', a group of which he was an active member, and the forces of the resurgent democracy. Critias had always been an oligarch, a friend of Sparta and an opponent of what he regarded as the democratic excesses of the Athenians. The 'Thirty' was a governing commission appointed after Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian war. Critias is said to have been primarily instrumental in bringing about the execution of Theramenes, a member of the 'Thirty' who seemed dangerously moderate in the eyes of his colleagues (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.3, 1-2). When Critias died he was probably about 50 years of age.

His first appearance on the stage of Athenian politics was in 415 BC, when he was implicated in a scandal concerning the guardian Hermai statues outside Athenian houses which had been mutilated on the night before the great Athenian task force sailed against Syracuse. It was suspected that the desecration had been committed by a pro-Spartan oligarchic group in Athens. He may have been a member of the 'Four Hundred' who were entrusted with reorganising the Athenian constitution in 411 BC (Guthrie, 1969, p. 301). He is said to have proposed the recall of Alcibiades, who had been exiled after the affair of the Hermai. The democratic recovery after the 'Four Hundred' resulted in his exile to Thessaly. As Xenophon relates it in *Hellenica* (2.3, 1-2), Theramenes' last speech in his own defence accuses this committed oligarch of occupying himself in Thessaly with the organisation of democratic factions against the rulers. This apparently paradoxical suggestion may be accurate in fact. In men like Critias, or Alcibiades, with whom he may be compared in respect of aristocratic birth, intellectual background and ambition (*Mem.* 1.2, 14), committed political views could occasionally be subordinated to personal interests, sometimes even to whims.

Critias belonged to a family of distinction which had played a

notable part in history. His great grandfather, Dropides, was an associate of the sage and reformer Solon early in the sixth century BC (Plato, *Timaeus* 20d). This noble house had been celebrated in poetry, we are told in Plato's *Charmides* (157e), by Anacreon, Solon and other distinguished poets. Family pride would not have allowed Plato to mention that one surviving verse of Solon advises in connection with an earlier Critias, the son of Dropides: 'Tell red-headed Critias to do as his father tells him'. The demagogue Cleophon is supposed to have quoted this verse in a speech directed against Critias, as part of his attempt to prove an inherited 'wild streak' in Critias' family. Aristotle refers to Cleophon's words in his *Rhetoric* (1375b, 32).

Critias and Alcibiades were friends and pupils of Socrates in the special sense of the word 'pupil' applicable to adherents to Socrates, who received no money for his teaching. Xenophon's harsh assessment of the two of them, which is not totally unfair, is that they only wanted to learn skill in argument from him, and not a philosophical way of conducting their lives (*Mem.* 1.2, 12-24). Both of them, according to Xenophon, were nevertheless able to restrain their disruptive impulses as long as they were under Socrates' personal influence. Obviously Socrates' control over Critias was partial, not complete; for Xenophon in the same chapter tells us (1.2, 29) that Critias fell in love with a young man called Euthydemus (to be distinguished from the Euthydemus in Plato's dialogue) who was also a member of Socrates' circle. Critias pestered Euthydemus with unwanted attentions, and finally was put down by Socrates' comment that his behaviour in rubbing up against the young man reminded him of the way pigs rub themselves against stones. This was a cause of lasting offence, and Xenophon says that Critias' hatred of Socrates was still fresh when, as a member of the 'Thirty', he promulgated amongst the proposed constitutional reforms a law that nobody should be permitted to teach the art of *logoi*.

Critias was not an inventive thinker. He was a stylist of some merit according to Philostratus (*Vit. Soph.*) and Hermogenes (*On Styles* B 401 25). His style had power and originality, a delight in paradox, purity of Attic diction, and avoidance of poeticisms that was in the best of taste. He wrote hexameter verses, elegies, some of literary interest, some describing noteworthy inventions of various peoples, also addresses in elegaic verse to friends such as Alcibiades. Fragments survive, but not many. He wrote constitutions (*Politeiai*) in verse and in prose. We have verses from his Constitution of Sparta, and prose fragments and references to constitutions of Athens, Sparta, Thessaly.

The *Politeia* or 'Constitution' was to become a familiar literary species in the following decades, for example Xenophon's (he is possibly the author) *Constitution of Sparta*; Plato's *Republic*; Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution* — a survivor of 158 *Politeiai* composed by Aristotle and his colleagues. Many others were written: one, the partisan pamphlet on the constitution of Athens which is usually called the 'Old Oligarch', may antedate Critias' work. He wrote two books of *Aphorisms*, and a book on *The Nature of Desire or of Virtues*.

He regarded mind (gnome) as the important controlling element in man's composition. We do not know how far he pushed the dualism between mind and body: probably not far, as his words 'neither that which he perceives with the rest of his body nor that which he understands by means of mind (gnome)' suggest (Galen, *Commentary on Hippocrates; De Offic. Med.* 1.1; D-K B 39). This is from the first book of his *Aphorisms*: he says further, Galen tells us, 'people comprehend (only) when they have become habituated to being healthy in their gnome'. These remarks, together with two further references by Galen taken from Critias' *Homiliai* (lectures) (D-K 88 40 41a): 'If you yourself should practise to become adequate in your gnome, you would suffer the minimum amount of injustice (from your senses)', and in Plato's *Charmides* 161b the view that wisdom resides in doing the things that concern oneself is attributed to him. Parallelism between gnome and the bodily senses seems to be what he is suggesting rather than categorical differences between them. Possibly this is supported by Aristotle when he says that Critias regarded the mind or soul (*psyche*) as identical with the blood (*Psychology* 405b, 5). This view may show some influence from Empedocles, possibly mediated through Gorgias (Guthrie, 1969, pp. 302-3).

In the conduct of his life Critias showed that he belonged to the company of those who give more importance to the imperatives of nature (*physis*) than the prescriptions of man-made law (*nomos*). In his play *Perithous* (D-K 88 22) he says that good *tropos* or 'character' is more secure than law (*nomos*), for 'no orator could ever pervert it no matter how he vexed it and tormented it this way and that with his arguments' (Stobaeus 3.37, 15). This might be an assertion of *physis*, in the form of *tropos*, against arguments based on convention or agreement (Untersteiner, 1954, p. 333). However, his actions speak louder than any argument he could have produced on the topic. Yet he believed firmly, as we have seen, in the good effects upon the mind of training or habituation. In a line that probably came from his verse *Constitution of Sparta* he says 'more people become good by practice

than by nature' (88 D-K 29; Stobaeus 3.2, 9, 11). Like Gorgias and Plato he was a firm believer in education and training, which does not contradict his view of physis as of prime importance. His interest in the products of skills and crafts points in the same direction, and may even reflect Socrates' frequent references to craftsmen as examples in his arguments.

An extensive fragment of his satyric drama *Sisyphus* contains Critias' most impressive surviving contribution to the flow of arguments and ideas that make up the sophistic movement. Few now would doubt the authorship, though some ancient authors supposed it to have been composed by Euripides (see Kerferd, 1981, p. 53). The sentiments of the passage are clear enough: man began in a state of brute nature; law was introduced by agreement; religion was invented to counteract secret law-breaking by means of its fictitious fear of divine vengeance. Here are the sentiments attributed to a character in a play; but they probably represent those of the author. Critias was able to evade the anger of the Athenian authorities at the 'impiety' of his lines by putting them into the mouth of a wild, untamed character in Satyric drama which allowed more licence to ridicule the gods than was permitted for serious criticisms of religion in tragedy (Guthrie, 1969, p. 69).

There was once a time when human life was chaotic,
brutal and subservient to force,
when there was neither a reward for being decent
or any restraint on evil men.

In consequence human beings seem to me to
have enacted laws to be avengers
so that justice might be ruler
and keep violence in subjection;
and if anybody did wrong he would be punished.

After this, since the laws prevented people
from doing violent deeds that could be seen,
they committed them in secret, and it was then
I think some man of clever well-compacted intellect
invented fear of the gods for mortal men so that
it might be a kind of terror for wrongdoers
even if in secret they did or said or thought
some wrongful thing:

further to this he introduced the divine principle
that there exists a spirit flourishing in life that
is free from decay,
hearing and seeing with its intelligence with supreme

powers of thought, applying its vast faculties and bearing a god-like nature, that will hear everything said amongst mankind and see their every act. (D-K 88 B 25)

Critias is not of great significance in the history of fifth-century-BC intellectual achievement, but his character and career give us a suggestive example of the effects of sophistic teaching upon an individual who is not notably scrupulous or self-restrained. We need not blame the sophistic movement, or Socrates, who was an idiosyncratic contributor to its development, for the way in which Critias or Alcibiades conducted their careers. It may be argued that they would have had less readily available rationalisations for their aggressive and ruthless ambition if they had not learned skill in argument; and this is a point which Socrates' accusers did not forget when they held the crimes of his pupils against him. Critias possibly owes something to Gorgias' teaching; in his time in Thessaly he could hardly have failed to come in contact with Gorgianic ideas. We recall that all Thessaly *gorgiazai*.

Plato disapproved of the 'Thirty's' attempt to involve Socrates in their political murders by appointing him with a number of other men to arrest Leon of Salamis (*Apol.* 32c; *Epistle.* 7, 324d-e). Socrates refused. Plato disapproves of his relatives in the 'Thirty', Critias and Charmides, but does not specifically name them. He does say that the attempt of his friends to use Socrates repelled him from taking up their invitation to participate in the work of government. Yet he writes of his uncle and his cousin in no unfriendly tone in the dialogues. Critias appears as a wise and impressive personage in the later dialogues *Timaeus* and *Critias*, and is respectfully treated in the early work *Charmides*. He remembered his kinsman as he was before evil had fully taken hold of him and he wrote of him as he had been and, perhaps, as he might have been. In the event, Critias became what we can envisage Callicles becoming in due time (Guthrie, 1969, p. 299).

Aristotle mentions the political actions of the 'Thirty' (*Athenian Constitution* 35 f; *Politics* 1305b, 25), but seems to regard Charmides as the leader. In *Rhetorica* (1416b, 26) he says that Critias' deeds are little known and would need to be explained fully in any speech that dealt with them, as distinct from those of Achilles, that everybody knows. Philostratus (*Vit. Soph.* 1.16) says the discrepancy between Critias' words and deeds makes it hard to take him seriously. Yet Aelian in the third century AD had Critias' writings available, and so had others in later centuries. His fame and infamy survived.

Alcidamas

Alcidamas was a pupil of Gorgias. His place of origin was the Aeolian city of Elaea in Asia Minor, and his speech addressed to the Spartans on the subject of Messene indicates that he must have been alive after 362 BC and the battle of Mantinea. It was in this *Messeniakos Logos* that he uttered the statement for which he is most famous: 'God has endowed all men with freedom: nature made no man a slave' (Scholiast on Aristotle's *Rhetorica* 1373b, 18).

This view was not to be so clearly or directly stated again until the time of the Stoics. I agree with Guthrie in rejecting attempts to water down its significance (Guthrie, 1969, p. 159). Nobody assumes that slavery was on the point of being abolished in the middle of the fourth century BC, but Alcidamas' statement is a significant step on a long road.

He was a rhetorician rather than a dialectician, and he had a high regard for spontaneity in speech-making. Like Plato, he distrusted the efficacy of the dead, permanent written word which could not enlarge upon its meaning in response to questions. One of his works was actually on the writing of speeches and its implications, another on Odysseus. In the great opposition between *physis* and *nomos*, he stands on the side of *physis*. Laws are the primitive queens of cities, and they permit all kinds of wickedness. Philosophy is a defence against the harshness of traditional, law-regulated society (Ar. *Rhet.* 1406b, 11), and the only statesmen worthy of respect are philosophers (Ar. *Rhet.* 1398b, 11-19). Although this view lacks context, it must remind one of Plato's advocacy of philosophers as kings or kings become philosophers (*Rep.* 473c). Philosophy could be trusted because it involved ethical argument, which law did not (Untersteiner, 1954, pp. 341-2).

Lycophron

Most of our information about Lycophron comes from references to him in Aristotle's writings or later commentators upon them. He, like Alcidamas, was a pupil of Gorgias, and he has an interest in the difficulties that arise when you try to say that *x* 'is' *y* or 'white' or 'large' or whatever. The best-known argument associated with him is mentioned by Aristotle in *Physics* (185b, 25). Aristotle states the problem as if it principally concerns the puzzle of the 'one' and the 'many'. He mentions that because of a fear that he might predicate 'many' of a subject which is 'one', Lycophron abandoned the use of 'is'.

If for instance you say 'Socrates *is* white', you may very well be predicating of Socrates a characteristic that does not belong to him alone, and may therefore be 'many' predicated of 'one'. By abandoning 'is' and saying something like 'white-Socrates' you can hope to bypass the problem. The problem, as it is stated by Themistius, consists in this: you can say of a subject that it 'exists' or 'is', but you cannot logically link an attribute to it by means of 'is'. The problem resides in the nature of the verb 'is' which is considered by Lycophron to identify subject with predicate, not simply to link the two. It is a question of the verb 'to be' entailing 'existence' so that the predicate really *is* (in terms of real being) identically the same as the subject of which it is said. The difficulty was defused by Aristotle's analysis of different kinds of 'being' and the development of various predicates or categories which can be associated with a subject. Plato also was well on the way to solving the difficulty in his *Sophist*. Yet it remained alive for Antisthenes and other fourth-century philosophers of the various Socratic schools. In suggesting 'white-Socrates' instead of 'Socrates is white', Lycophron may be accepting the idea that you can experience directly a composite impression without reference at all to the awkward verb 'to be' (Guthrie, 1969, p. 211).

Perhaps this knowledge 'by acquaintance' is implied by Lycophron's use of the word *synousia* (associations) in his discussion of the process of knowing (Guthrie, 1969, p. 217). According to Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 1045b, 10), Lycophron defined knowledge as a *synousia* of 'knowing' and 'soul'. Alexander of Aphrodisias (third century AD) in his comment on this passage introduces the possibility of a regress by saying that Lycophron really should have said knowledge is a matter of knowing an association of knowing and soul.

Lycophron's strictness on the matter of predications made it difficult for him to conduct dialectical argument. However, he was not prevented from formulating statements about the nature of society. He regarded human society as a military alliance (Aristotle, *Politics* 1280b, 8); the alliance of citizens against chaos and disorder. This alliance within a city state is different only in spatial terms from alliances formed between separate states and cities. Law is therefore a convention or agreement between people, a guarantor of their rights in relation to each other. Noble birth is nothing but a matter of words and opinions (Aristotle Fg. 91 Rose; Stobaeus 4, 29.24).

Lycophron was an acute and, as far as we can judge, a vigorous thinker. His problem with *is* reminds us of those associated with Antisthenes (Chapter 2).

Euenos

Euenos of Paros was a contemporary of Socrates who is mentioned at *Phaedo* 60d as a poet, rhetorician and a teacher of *arete*.

Xeniades

Xeniades of Corinth is worth mentioning for the extremity of his views. Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 7.53) tells us that he regarded 'all things as false: every imagination and opinion is lying: what becomes, comes from nothing: what decays, decays to nothing'. This is all we know of his philosophy, which seems to represent some paranoid fringe of the school of thought initiated by Parmenides.

Euthydemus and Dionysodorus

These two brothers from the island of Chios should perhaps be mentioned together. They work together to pursue hard eristic and anti-logic techniques which seek to confuse opponents. This is how they appear in the dialogue *Euthydemus* in which Plato places them in conversation with Socrates and Cleinias. The first axiom of their logic is that the verb 'to be' at all times and in all places is absolute and existential in its meaning. The second would appear to be that if you can say *x* or refer to it, this means that there must be an *x*. They are associated with the maxim *ouk estin antilegein*: it is impossible 'to contradict', 'to say not' or 'negate' (*Euthyd.* 286c) which is attributed to Protagoras and others. In spite of the Eleatic toughness of their eristic (Sprague, 1972, p. 294) they did not seem to have a developed view of truth or being (*Adv. Math.* 7.13): they regarded both as relative, though they were rigid about the existential character of all uses of the verb 'to be'. Protagoras may have been an influence upon them: Euthydemus diverged from Protagoras' view of the man/measure doctrine (Guthrie, 1969, p. 206) and evidently thought that it implied not that each individual has his own view of truth; but that 'all things are all the time simultaneously endowed with all attributes together.' The dramatic date of the *Euthydemus* is around 420 BC. Socrates is no longer young. It is hard to gauge their ages, but they seem to be of mature years.

Anonymus Iamblichi is the name given to a few pages of sophistic

argument isolated from the text of the *Protrepticus* of Iamblichus, a neoplatonist philosopher of the third century AD. They have been identified as being of fourth-century-BC origin, but the author remains unknown. They represent a selection of views from the sophist movement which somebody has tried to put together in an idiosyncratic but unorganised note. Arete has a moral significance in these pages and does not simply connote functional 'excellence' or 'success'. The author favours *nomos* rather than *physis* and rejects the kind of pose we see adopted by Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*. It is natural for man to make and obey laws: this is as much a matter of *physis* as unrestrained aggression and self-seeking. This is an attempt on the part of an amateur philosopher to reconcile the two parties of this great conflict. In general, the message of this little tract is that arete is eventually the most advantageous policy: a less sophisticated parallel of attitudes taken by Socrates in *Gorgias* and in his conversation with Thrasy-machus in the *Republic*.

Dissoi Logoi (twofold arguments) is the name, taken from its first two words, that has been given to a tract which is attached to the end of the manuscript of Sextus Empiricus. The essay is written in a dialect with noticeable Doric features, and it can be dated to about 400 BC by a reference it contains to a recent victory of Spartan forces over the Athenians. It contains arguments which are capable of bearing opposed meanings, and it has sections dealing with Good and Bad, Decent and Disgraceful, Just and Unjust, True and False, together with a number of untitled sections. It has the look of a student's lecture notes, but this appearance may be deceptive. The contents are what we might expect in Protagoras' *Antilogiai*, but it is safer simply to designate them as typically sophistic.

For example, to prove that Decent and Disgraceful are really the same, the following double argument is brought forward: for women to wash themselves in the home is decent, but women washing in the palaestra would be disgraceful [it would be all right for men]. Therefore, the same thing is both disgraceful and decent. The section on True and False is more subtle, and seems to bring out more clearly the problem of how words relate to the reality they purport to describe. The same sentence can be true or false according to what is the actual case. 'He is a temple thief' is true only if in fact he has robbed a temple. If he has not, the same words make up a false proposition. It has a flavour of contemporary interest. R.K. Sprague has published an excellent translation of the *Dissoi Logoi* in *Mind* LXXVI (April 1968) pp. 155-67 (see also Sprague, 1972, pp. 279-93).

4 NATURE VERSUS LAW, RELATIVISM AND THE ORIGINS OF SOCIETY

The earliest levels of Greek thinking about mankind's social relationships that we can reach involve the gods as instructors and participants in the development of human society with its imperatives, prohibitions, virtues and evils. Both of Hesiod's great poems, *Theogony* and *The Works and The Days*, assume that the gods are important sources of our awareness of right and wrong, our information about the proper conduct of life in a world that has not been designed to be totally comfortable or positive in relation to us and our survival. Astraea, the Star-Maiden, sometimes identified with *Dike* (Justice) left the earth at the end of the 'Bronze Age' of Hesiod's *The Works and The Days* and took up residence in the sky as the constellation we know as the *Virgin*. Alcinous, the king of Phaeacia in Homer's *Odyssey*, recalls a time when the gods were accustomed to come and feast in company with the Phaeacians. Divine parentage of mortal people is an important source of dramatic motivation in the *Iliad*, and without the pervasive surviving notion that gods were interested regulators of individual and social humanity, the concept of fifth-century Athenian tragic drama would have been impossible.

If great men and women had not been capable of going their own wilful paths despite the wishes of the gods, the conflict of motives upon which tragedy pivots would not have been available. Antigone in Sophocles' play follows what she believes to be the imperative of laws that come from the gods. She gives burial rites to her dead brother Polyneices against the clear instructions of her uncle Creon, the ruler of Thebes, who has forbidden this ceremony to the traitor who came to attack his native city. Creon regards Polyneices as being exempted by his action from the universally respected rite of burial. Antigone says that the gods have framed 'unwritten laws' and that the sanctity of these overrides the commands of the state. The unwritten law clearly is that a sister must give proper burial ceremonies to a dead brother no matter what the circumstances of his death. This conflict of laws, those of the gods unwritten, conscience-borne imperatives, and those of the state which are man-made decisions directed to ensure the coherence and good order of society, brings disaster both to Antigone and to Creon. Each of these two breaks the law that inspires and motivates the other.

The laws Antigone upholds are not laws of nature, but have been god-given in some mysterious past (Kerferd, 1981, pp.113 f). One point emerges from this tragic conflict: human nature impelled by its own passionate interpretation of rules of life, divinely or humanly originated, is separate in character from the laws of gods or men.

The notion of law which has a divine origin finds support in Heraclitus (D-K 22, 32), and it possibly indicates the primacy of divine over human laws (D-K 22 B 114; Kerferd, 1981, p. 113). However, it was not this question of the hierarchical organisation of authority that exercised the Sophists. Critias, you will remember, dismissed the tradition of divinely ordained laws with the criticism that this was a piece of secondarily concocted humbug brought in to patch up the inefficient structure of human laws which allowed undetected law breakers to get off free of any penalty. The 'divine' element was designed to make secret transgressors live in fear for their futures, even if they never should be detected.

By the time we reach the middle of the fourth century BC, the distinction between divine imperatives, those unwritten laws of human life, and legislated law was clear. In his last great book, the *Laws*, Plato is definite that unwritten laws were not laws in the proper sense of the term. And this was substantially the view of the predecessors of Plato, the Sophists who argued the case between *physis* (nature) and *nomos* (law) as claimants for predominance in the conduct of human life. There is one very important difference between the Sophists and Plato on the question of what law (*nomos*) actually is. The Sophists saw it as mere agreement amongst people that *x* and not *y* should be the custom observed. Plato believed that *nomos*, like everything else, should be based upon some apprehension of the true nature of reality, and he never excluded the gods from a validating role.

When Sophists talked about *physis* they may not explicitly have excluded the gods; they generally ignored them. *Physis* was the term used by the Ionian philosopher-scientists of the sixth century BC to describe the universe. Their theories about *physis* did not simply accept the world's appearance as the truth of things, but suggested that the visible and variegated environment was all of it really 'water', according to Thales' account; the 'indefinite' (*to apeiron*) in Anaximander's opinion; or as Anaximenes supposed, various developments and metamorphoses of 'air'. Thales had the reputation of being *atheos*, but we have no proof that this was true of him or any of these *physiologoi*. Divine intervention seemed — as far as the fragmentary account of their opinions allows us to suppose — irrelevant to their views of the

universe. Physis also means the way in which a thing or things are structured or constituted. The idea of growth and development stands close to this meaning, as Aristotle pointed out (*Ar. Met.* 1015a, 13 f). In Pindar's poetry the *phya* (equivalent to physis) of the aristocratic athletes whose achievements he was commissioned to celebrate, was their breeding and ancestry together with the growth and nurture leading from it. This in effect made them what they were. However, the Sophists were not thinking so much about physis of the physical universe as about the promptings and impulses that were part of man's organisation as a creature. They were interested in the urges that usually were repressed by the rules or laws that society imposed. According to their individual persuasions they exalted or deplored or derided the legal restraints placed upon human desires to maximise the products of such emotions as greed, power-hunger, lust and cruelty, all of which seemed to be more probable parts of man's natural organisation than the agreements to exercise restraint and reasonableness which were laws.

Yet had it not been for the earlier philosophers' scientific theories which bypassed the inherited traditions about the gods' participation in human affairs and origins, the antithesis between *nomos* and *physis* would not have been of interest to them.

Nomos, on the other hand, is basically 'custom', the way in which people observe a pattern of behaviour in living together. The basic meaning implies custom or way of doing rather than something 'determined' or 'laid down'. Another Greek word, *themis*, has the implication of 'laying down' rules, but it is mostly used of very ancient rules given by the gods. *Nomos* in time acquired the significance we give to law: a rule decided upon by the person or persons who govern, and which is formally determined, written down and made known. This more recent meaning was well known to Aristotle, who distinguishes law from custom on the very point that law can compel, whereas custom cannot (*Politics* 1269a, 20; cf. Guthrie, 1969, p. 57). But it is impossible to eradicate completely the idea of custom from the meaning of *nomos* as it was understood by many of the Sophists. For them, in many ways, *nomos* was 'custom' which was the product of agreement by groups of people.

The question of *nomos* as against *physis* seemed to be an important one for the following reasons: even if the gods no longer seemed so involved in the conduct of human life as once they had; even if appearances could not be trusted innocently as conveyors of the truth of things; even if everything seemed to be a matter of opinion and certainty

was hard to come by, life nevertheless had to go on. For the individual, that meant life as a member of society, a *polis* or city state. Survival and prosperity in a polis involved success in relation to fellow citizens. And all citizens were constrained by the city's laws.

In this competitive but law-ridden environment, what if the laws are nothing but the public contrivance of my competitors, by definition lesser men than myself? That which is good for me cannot be good for my competitor. That which is to his advantage must be an obstacle to me. Intellectual certainty may be beyond my grasp. As far back as Xenophanes and Theognis (Barnes, 1, 1979, pp. 136 ff) the unreliability and variousness of mere opinion has been well known and the impediments to certainty notorious; all the same I can still identify my desire and ambitions and observe the way in which they do not coincide with the laws. In all of this I am faced by a problem which is of importance for the conduct of life.

Aristotle (*Soph. Elench.* 173a, 7) says that people in the old times were concerned with the confrontation between nature and law. There is no reason to think he is speaking of anybody earlier than the Sophists. He may be suggesting that at the time when he is writing, the controversy between *nomos* and *physis* is quite dead. Aristophanes had no doubt that to follow nature (*Clouds* 1078, produced 422 BC) was to do exactly as you pleased without worries. He also makes his character Pheidippides suggest in the same play (1420-4), 'Why can't I lay down a new law [*nomos*] to the effect that sons should beat their fathers?'. Beating a parent was subject to strong tabu in Classical Athens, and *patroloias*, 'father-beater', is a serious insult. Pheidippides' appeal is obviously directed to the 'natural' irritation a son may feel in dealing with an awkward and cantankerous father. Nature suggests that the old gentleman be administered a blow that would mend his attitudes and make him frightened to give further trouble. It seemed after all 'natural' that when he was strong and his son was weak, he could admonish his son with blows.

Aristophanes sees the implications of the *nomos/physis* conflict clearly: 'natural' urges such as anger or aggression can motivate the creation of new *nomoi*. The *Anonymus Iamblichii*, in his milder way, sees laws as products of nature, and I am not inclined to think him naïve in this, only excessively optimistic; for the fact of daily life in Athens' participative *demokratia* was that 'natural' anger could be the motivating cause of legislation which sometimes had horrifyingly cruel results.

'Nature' assumed superiority over law in that it is antecedent in

time to law; it is more original, older and thus more real and worthy of respect. It belongs to the primeval age of Homer's Cyclopes who lived as rough pastoralists, had no laws, and each ruled his own family and herds. Perhaps it is significant that there is a marked traditional link between the introduction of agriculture and the creation of laws (Diodorus, 13.26, 13; Isocrates, 82, 83, 84; Guthrie, 1969, p. 72). This primal physis was not simply earlier than civilised organisations, it was crude, cruel and animal. Before nomoi were agreed upon and imposed, man's life was like that of the beasts (Euripides, *Supplikes* 201-13) and Critias takes a similar view in his *Sisyphus*. When it seems difficult or even impossible to obtain clear knowledge, when, as in the *Dissoi Logoi*, your only awareness is the relativistic: z is good for x but bad for y , therefore z is both good and bad at the same time; then you may very well decide that 'natural' promptings, be they never so base, are least discernible. You may also come to believe that animality has some kind of existential naturalness as distinct from the legal constraints that irk your urges. The beast-standard is, after all, of immemorial antiquity, from times long before the world's weaker brethren banded together to imprison it with nomoi. You can assert, like Callicles, that you are actually following 'nature's law' in being unrestrainedly aggressive in pursuit of your advantage, and there will be those who will fall in love with this brutality at first sight and applaud you for your devastatingly truthful epigram.

The question of nomos against physis flows into another one: that which concerns the origins of society. Before we consider this, we shall remind ourselves of the opinions of Sophists we have mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3. But as a preliminary to this review of opinions, let us on this important matter recall that laws or nomoi, because of their variety in various cities, carry with them a distinct aroma of relativism. What is proper in Sparta is improper in Athens, as the *Dissoi Logoi* tell us. The laws of Sparta could hardly be more different from the laws of Athens in many important areas of life. Herodotus took delight in describing the variousness of nomoi in the different peoples of the inhabited world. Plato admits that in their notions of what is 'just', 'holy' or their opposites, each city lays down what is to be regarded as 'just', etc., and this view remains firm for as long as the inhabitants want it (Theaetetus). Acceptance of variations of standards of good and bad through time and across space, does not in itself force you to exclude the possibilities of a firm and permanent standard of truth. The Sophists were not particularly interested in finding such a philosophical standard; but Socrates made it his life's work to seek it,

and Plato put forward a theory based on his quest. Aristotle had a certain ineradicable relativism in him. He thought that statements about good and bad could be comprehensively accurate or unexceptionally applicable to every case, since some manifestly good things could on certain occasions prove harmful (Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1094, 11-22; Barnes, 2, 1980, pp. 218-19), but he was concerned with the natural limitations of our comprehension of such matters, not anxious to fall back into the brute embrace of physis as it was understood by Callicles, with whom we shall begin.

Callicles, in Plato's *Gorgias*, was ferociously eager to show that because of nomos, which is the feeble expedient of collective weaklings to hobble the strong, injustice has come to have the repute of being shameful to the person who commits it, rather than to the sufferer. But nature's 'legislation' is on the side of the strong (*Gorgias* 483a-b), and might justifies its own actions by its own strength (484b). We hear in him the harsh ideas offered to the people of Melos by the Athenians who have determined to destroy their state (Thucydides 5, 85-111). Prodicus wrote *On the Nature of Man*, but we do not know whether his thesis touched upon our present topic: certainly in his *Horai*, *Kakia* seems to personify the 'natural' urge to self-gratification, and *Arete* the restraints imposed upon it by the civilising influence of nomos. In the speech attributed to Hippias in Plato's *Protagoras*, we find that he begins his attempts to reconcile differing opinions of introductory remarks that refer to the 'natural' kinship of all those present: they are fellow citizens *physei* by nature; not nomoi by law. Law, like a *tyrannos*, an unconstitutional dictator, enforces many things contrary to nature. I have already indicated my suspicion that this preamble may be more rhetorical than philosophical. It is perhaps a paradoxical variant of the idea that occurs in Herodotus (7.104), where Demaratus tells Xerxes that the Greeks are free men who yet obey a master: the law (Guthrie, 1969, p. 69). It is paradoxical because tyrannos carries the implication of rule that is outside the law. Nevertheless, Hippias is not likely to have been misrepresented completely by Plato on this issue; and, cautiously, we may inscribe his name on the side of physis. Thrasymachus makes no specific mention of the conflict between nomos and physis, but his bitter attitude about the apparent unrealisability of justice in any other form than the self-interest of the ruler, allocates him to the company of those who maintain physis is the more important. He seems, according to Plato's portrait of him in the *Republic*, to be unhappy at the predominance of selfish forces against his undefined but vigorous notion of genuine justice. Antiphon

definitely considers the realm of physis to have priority over that of nomos: it may be that for him the priority is not merely of an historical or evolutionary kind, but ontological in that those things which are developed 'by nature' are true, and those that are products of human agreements are not. If this is what he thought (D-K 87 B 24; Furley, 1981, p. 83), and the remains of his work *Aletheia* (Truth) lends some support to the supposition, he is probably to be regarded as holding in a more definite form a similar view to other proponents of physis' claims. Life and death both belong, he thinks, to the realm of nature; life is promoted by what is beneficial for the individual, death comes from those things that are not beneficial. But what is enforced upon the individual by the law rather than nature, always does him injury. It is impossible to do justice without doing somebody an injury: even true evidence presented in court will hurt somebody. If you give accurate testimony against somebody, you are (1) being just, (2) being unjust because you are taking sides, (3) being unjust in that you are harming somebody. Justice falls down in a heap of fallacies: only nature is beneficial. Critias also is an eloquent advocate of physis: he sees the invention of laws as brakes contrived to inhibit the realisation of natural instincts. He regards predatory, savage urges as more genuine and real than the restraints men have devised for them. As far as we can gather, Alcidas' view of the question is that he sees god and nature in association as guarantors of man's liberty against man's agreements to enslave himself — the laws! 'God has given freedom to all: nature has made no man a slave.' Here again it would be helpful to know how strongly he held these views, which occurred in an oration. Lycophron, according to Aristotle (*Politics* 1280b, 8), regarded law as an agreement which guaranteed people the mutual rights of parties to the agreement. He appears to be more in favour of nomos. So too was *Anonymus Iamblichi*, who regarded the law as a product of nature.

Most of these Sophists thought physis was a more fundamental and genuine entity than the structures of nomoi agreed upon by men. None of those who favoured physis seemed to think that nomos represented an advance from the raw state of affairs over which it eventually prevailed. But Protagoras held this latter opinion according to Plato's account of him (*Protagoras* 320d ff). No doubt this is a pastiche of Protagoras and is not an actual quotation from his work, *The Original State of Things*. Yet probably it gives us a fairly reliable picture of his principal line of argument. Its resemblance to *mythoi* uttered by Socrates from time to time in Plato's dialogues, may lead us to suspect some Platonic interference. On the other hand, we are informed that

Plato, in his *Republic*, was considerably influenced by Protagoras' *Antilogiai* (Diogenes Laertius 3.37, 57 referring to Aristoxenus and Favorinus: D-K 80 B 5). It is impossible to determine how pervasive or important this influence was. We should be as imprudent to underestimate as to exaggerate it.

The speech begins 'there was once a time', a phrase which also occurs in Critias' *Sisyphus* at the beginning of a story of social evolution that takes a very different line. Plato may be alluding to his kinsman's *mythos*, or perhaps using a stock introductory phrase:

There was once a time when there were gods, but there were no mortal species. When the appointed time for their creation came, the gods formed them inside the earth from a mixture of earth and fire and things that blend with earth and fire. When they were on the point of bringing them into the light, they instructed Prometheus and Epimetheus to provide and distribute appropriate faculties [or powers, *dynameis*] to each. Epimetheus begged Prometheus to let him do the distributing. 'When I distribute,' he said, 'you watch carefully.' He gained his point and made the distribution like this: to some creatures he allocated strength without speed; he equipped the weaker species with speed. He provided some with weapons; but for those to whom he allocated an unarmed nature, he provided another faculty to enable them to survive: those that he made small, he provided with a method of escape by flying or the characteristic of underground dwelling. He ensured the survival of the creatures he created large by the very fact of their largeness. And balancing out all their characteristics in this way, he made his distribution and by means of these devices he made sure that no species should be eliminated.

When he had secured defences for them from mutual destruction, he arranged that they should have comfort against climatic hardship by clothing them with thick fur and tough skins capable of resisting the winter and the heat so that when they went to their beds, they would have, as it were, personal blankets growing on each of them. He fitted some of them with hooves under their feet; others with fur and hard, bloodless skin. Then he organised their various means of sustenance; some to eat vegetation from the earth; others fruit and others roots. For some he arranged that their nourishment should be eating other animals. He ordained a low reproduction rate for these [carnivores] and a high rate for the species on which they preyed, providing in this way for their survival. (*Prot.* 320d-321a)

You can see that the gods are involved in creating living creatures. This part of the account is 'pre-Ionian' in tone, more reminiscent of Hesiod. The distribution of special organs to aid survival is both acute and naïve in its biological analysis. The story up to this point is morally neutral.

Now since Epimetheus was not excessively bright, he did not realise that he had used up all the faculties. He still had the human species to deal with and it still had no [specialised] faculties, and he did not know how to deal with it. He was puzzling over this when Prometheus came up to have a look at the distribution and he observed that, while the other creatures were in a well-arranged condition in every respect, only humanity was naked, with no foot covering, without bedding and unarmed. And already the destined day was at hand in which mankind also would have to emerge from the earth into the light.

Prometheus was bewildered as to what means of survival he could find for mankind and he stole fire and technological skill [*entechnos sophia*, literally cleverness associated with crafts] from Hephaestus and Athene. The skill would not have been capable of control or use if it had not been accompanied by fire, but with these he endowed humanity.

Thus mankind had the technical capacity to survive, but the species had no capacity for living in a society. This faculty was in the possession of Zeus. Prometheus had not yet the ability to reach the citadel of Zeus. However, he made his way secretly into the temple shared by Athene and Hephaestus in which they both pursued their crafts. He stole Hephaestus' skill relating to fire and the other skill which belonged to Athene and gave them to mankind. Consequently mankind acquired an unfailing means of sustenance for its life. Later on, as the story goes, punishment for his theft caught up with Prometheus through the agency of Epimetheus. (*Prot.* 321b-322a)

The implication is that nature, as represented by the operation of Epimetheus, is far from perfect. The observation that man is in animal terms a very 'unspecialised' genus of mammalia is still accepted today. His survival mechanism is intelligence, represented here in the skills that Prometheus stole for him. His great specialism of development is *sophia*. Though he is different from the other creatures who in a vaguely implied evolutionary sequence were born before him, he is continuous with them; at first indeed he is very like them, though

without weapons for offence or defence. However, as the story goes on you will see that it asserts that man is different in that he participates in divine destiny and has kinship with the gods.

Since mankind participates in divine destiny, it was the first and only one of living creatures to believe in gods. This is because of its kinship with the gods; it also began to attempt the establishment of altars and statues of the gods. Then by means of its skill [*technei*] it soon organised sound and names [invented language] and invented houses and clothing and footwear and bedding and also the growing of food from the land.

Equipped with this level of culture, early man lived dispersed. There were no cities. People were killed by wild beasts because in every way they were feebler than they, and their technology was adequate for the production of food, but insufficient in respect of their war against wild animals. For people did not yet have the art of living in communities [*politike techne*] and part of this [*politike techne*] is the art of war [*polemike techne*]. They sought accordingly to gather into groups and survive by means of establishing cities [*poleis*]. So whenever they gathered together, they would do each other injury because they did not have *politike techne*, so they scattered again and began to be killed. (*Prot.* 322a-b)

Early attempts at coalescence into stable groups were frustrated by man's nature which produces conflict. It seems to be suggested that the nature of our species contained both potential individualism of the aggressive 'Calliclean' or 'Critian' stamp and also inklings of the benefits of co-operation. This condition of affairs described has a striking resemblance to the Athenian democracy in the latter part of the fifth century BC. We may suspect an element of satire in the account, either from Protagoras or, more probably, injected by Plato into the narrative.

Now Zeus was frightened about our species in case it should be completely extinguished, and he sent Hermes to give people self-restraint and justice so that these might be means of ordering the cities and be coalescent bonds of friendship. Hermes asked Zeus what policy he should employ in supplying self-restraint and justice to human beings. 'Am I to distribute these in the way special skills have been distributed? For they have been distributed in the following way: one who, for instance, has skill in medicine is sufficient to service many laymen, and the same is the case with other public

practitioners of skills. Am I to allocate self-restraint and justice amongst humanity in this way, or distribute them equally over all the people?' 'Over all', said Zeus, 'and let them all have share [in these gifts]. For there could be no cities if only a few possessed these skills as is the case with arts. And lay down a law from me that the person who cannot share in self-restraint and justice be killed as a pest to the city.' (*Prot.* 322c-d)

Intervention on the part of Zeus (Guthrie refers to Hesiod, *Works and Days* 276 in his comment on this passage: 1969, p. 55) saves humanity from destruction. People have been taught to be self-controlled and just. The Protagorean message is clear: all people possess enough *politike arete* to be full participants in civilised society. We have an argument for democracy rather than an authoritarian system; or at least we have an argument that can bear this meaning: the use of 'equally' suggests it. Protagoras' man/measure doctrine implies that everybody has an individual capacity for understanding and speaking that which is true. This position certainly does not exclude co-operation, persuasion and agreement. Protagoras is not perhaps represented as holding the view that man has an innate capacity for *nomos* (Guthrie, 1969, pp. 63-72), but as having the capacity to develop and change his way of living. In slow progress humanity learns to agree: the 'social contract' is not instantly legislated, it is learned with the aid of divine intimations. Xenophanes had this view of man's early social development: he said that the gods did not point out everything to humanity at the beginning, but allowed people to find out the better course gradually as time passed (Kahn, 1981, p. 104).

Possibly the original Protagoras would not have allowed the gods to play such important roles in the social education of early man. He might however have used them as stylish adornments for an essentially humane story and have made a point of including them to avoid giving offence. An important aspect of his account is his emphasis upon the time taken to achieve civilisation. Yet he certainly emphasises also the agreement whereby men were enabled to live securely and in harmony. He implies, but does not plainly assert, the contractual character of society.

Most of the thinkers whose opinion on *nomos* and *physis* we have discussed thought this agreement between people was the basis of a society regulated by law. They may be regarded as 'contractualists'. They agree that the main motive for this 'contract' was security of life against dangers, human or other. The contract is in most cases

regarded as secular and naturalistic in origin — whatever view we ultimately take of Protagoras' speech in Plato's dialogue. If the social contract in all cases were divinely inspired, there would be no way of asserting the claims of physis against it except by an overt attack upon the gods. This we find in a different context, that of despair, when Thrasymachus complains of the gods' indifference to justice; and in Critias when he makes his Sisyphus assert that religion is a swindle invented to shore up a social contract which has no basis in nature.

I agree with Kahn's suggestion (1981, p. 107) that the 'social contract' theory originates in the scientific speculations of the Ionians. Nobody knows exactly when it emerged from the tissue of Ionian theory about objective cosmic nature. The fundamental importance the Ionians attached to this nature be it water, *apeiron* or whatever, and their view of its capacity for change into various phenomena gave it priority over merely human affairs. Archelaus, a fifth-century-BC pupil of Anaxagoras, preserved intellectual continuity with the Ionian nature philosophers. In his opinion human beings developed later than other animal life:

Human beings were separated off from other animal life and established laws and arts and cities, etc. He says also that intelligence is a natural growth in all living things: each of them makes use of it, one more slowly than others; another more quickly. (D-K 60 A 45-6)

He thinks that human intelligence is a natural development. We have no reason at all to suppose that he regarded this intelligence which all living things possess to some degree, and which was — it is upheld — responsible for organised life, as being opposed to nature in its main inventions of laws, arts, cities.

Plato gave the social contract back to the gods and to nature: his adumbrated contract in *Republica* (369b-c) (Rankin, 1964, p. 105) between people of specialised talents to aid each others' deficiencies by forming a community is not too far from the development described by Archelaus, and is also reminiscent in words but not intent of *Protagoras* (322c-d) where Hermes mentions the variations in human abilities. The society Plato has in mind is founded upon agreement that specialised aptitudes and gifts vary. What is true, not what is advantageous, is the basis of his social contract. In a different form this appears in the *Crito*, where Socrates imagines himself in conversation with the laws of Athens which still claim his loyalty irrespective of the peril in

which he has been placed by them (*Crito* 50a-52d). They make the claim because they offered and he accepted their nurture and protection during the course of his life up to the time of his trial. This contrast is based on a notion of truth and piety that stands outside the concepts of convenience and advantage which we have been considering, but which was not trivial in the minds of many Athenians of his time. The idea may be originally Socratic rather than a Platonic development of a Socratic germ. Antisthenes speaks of a law of arete, a 'law of virtue', which reminds us of Socrates' virtuous position in the *Crito* and *Phaedo*. Antisthenes is likely to have derived this formulation from Socrates' teaching rather than from contact with Plato, whom he disliked.

Belief that laws were based on an agreement enhanced the individual's importance. The idea would not have developed so strong an identity if the question of nature versus laws had not been of concern to the Sophists. They found that their pupils wanted to learn ways of breaking through the screen of inhibition that *nomos* represented. If he could evade the restraints of *nomoi*, the competitive citizen possessed an advantage similar to that enjoyed by the man who knows the laws and can speak eloquently over an ignorant and inarticulate opponent. Practising Sophists had no professional incentive to seek out strict values for nature or for laws.

5 FIRST PHILOSOPHIES?

The emphasis of the Sophists' 'teaching' was upon techniques of argument and analyses of inherited social customs in order to lead their pupils to success in politics and law. Inquiring into the nature of being and reality was secondary to this main preoccupation or was not consistently pursued. Yet it was impossible for sophistic teaching to be divorced completely from speculations of a 'first philosophy' kind that are concerned with being and reality. The freedom, psychological and intellectual, that enabled the Sophists to pursue their favoured themes was the product of earlier inquiries into the nature of the world. The mere fact of sophistic teaching presupposes some rational liberation from the bonds of inherited social familial and civic custom, some separation from the accepted ancient view of the power of the gods over human life. In this chapter we shall look at the Sophists' available opinions, open or implied, about the question of 'being'.

Evidence of the connection between early sophistic dialectic and the Ionian tradition of cosmological speculation comes from the middle of the fifth century BC. It occurs in an essay which is part of the collection of writings associated with Hippocratic medical science. This work, *On the Nature of Man*, mentions a philosophical debate between people who seem to be using the same intellectual approach, but who are in fact asserting very different things. Since their assertions are at variance with each other, anybody present at their contentious discussion would conclude, we are told, that their understanding of what they were trying to argue about was also at cross purposes. One Sophist asserts that 'being' is unity, another that it is 'fire', another 'water', and so on. The important point is that they are represented as arguing in an 'antilogical' fashion, and on the question of 'being'.

Like the *physiologoi* of Miletus, they think reality is something other than the varieagated range of phenomena that we meet in the ordinary world of experience (Kerferd, 1981, p. 47). According to their way of thinking, there is a basic cause of the phenomenal world which can be summed up in an existent, such as water. Also there are some who say that being is plural rather than 'one'. The tract seems to be about 440 BC and therefore is contemporary with earlier stages of sophistic teaching.

Protagoras' view of this question of 'being' seems elegantly simple and innocent. Man is the measure (*metron*) of all things: the things that are that they are; the things that are not, that they are not. Apparently the isolated apprehender of the world measures its reality for himself, and his personal conclusion on this basis is true. It is true of what 'is'; what is 'real'; what is 'true' (no distinction is drawn competently between these three before Aristotle).

However, we are also informed that Protagoras' doctrine included 'public' realities as well as the private realities apprehended by individual human *metra*. 'A' apprehends the wind as cold, and this is no mere foible on the part of cold-rife 'A'. It really is cold, as he gauges it. 'B' finds it warm and uncomfortably humid, and he too is registering a real condition of affairs. The 'public' wind exists, but it is cold for 'A' and warm for 'B'. The wind is real. It is not a subjective fantasy shared by 'A', 'B', 'C' or any others you care to name. You cannot say the wind is not there; for if it were not, you would have no apprehension of what it was that is not there. If it did not exist you could not speak about it; at least, not in any reasonable or convincing way. You might make utterances, but they would have no relevance. In Protagoras' view it is 'impossible to contradict': *ouk estin antilegein*.

Yet it is clear that you can have statements made about the 'wind', for example, that are opposed to each other: 'A' finds it cold, 'B' finds it warm. These are not really contradictory, but are simply relative to the individual perceiving agents 'A' and 'B'. We are reminded of the *Dissoi Logoi* and the relativism in 'what is good for me is bad for you'. Protagoras and the originator of the *Dissoi Logoi* allow varying things to be said or predicated of one subject. The same subject *x* is such that you can say '*x* is good' while another says '*x* is bad' and both of you are right, according to Protagoras. Any attempt you make to exclude the validity of '*x* is bad' (the other person's view) is no more justified than his retort that you are mistaken in predicating 'good' of the subject *x*. You are both speaking the truth, for your respective apprehensions of *x* are equally valid. But this is not necessarily the same as saying (as the *Dissoi Logoi* would suggest) that *x* is therefore both good and bad. I think we may more probably say that according to Protagoras *x* or anything else of which you, as a human *metron*, speak the result of your perception or your apprehensions, can have various things predicated of it, but remains itself. The individual and differing predications are true, according to his doctrine, and should therefore be true of the 'being' *x*. We have no reason to believe that Protagoras would have understood that

statements can be made that are true, but nevertheless relate to non-existents.

Protagoras' ultimate theory of 'reality' or 'being' must remain a mystery to us. We can say that he probably did not regard being as 'one'; for he is said to have written a book opposed to the Eleatic philosophy which asserted that being is one.

Euthydemus seems generally to have followed Protagoras, but to have differed from him in thinking that all things are all the time simultaneously endowed with all attributes together. If he thought this, he need not necessarily have placed less importance on the *man/metron* principle. He may have been suggesting that given the range of individual and true perceptions that are possible, and the consequent number of true predications that can be made about reality, 'reality' would need to possess every attribute. He may just possibly, but not necessarily, have favoured the view that 'being' is 'one', rather than 'plurality'.

Gorgias' reversal of Parmenides' formulation 'being is, not being is not' seems to reflect his scepticism about the whole philosophical enterprise. In my discussion (Chapter 2) of his work on 'not being', I tried to support the view that his inversion of the Parmenidean thesis is an important essay in critical philosophy. Gorgias seems to be aware of the problems involved in the notion that 'being' is capable of isolation from everything else but itself. This view assumes that if 'being' becomes connected in any way with any characteristic or quality or attribute, its 'beingness' is alloyed or altered or infringed. Any alteration of 'being' means it can be said 'to be' something other than itself. And if it is something other than itself, it is no longer 'being'. He refutes this monocular and puritanical view of 'being' by asserting 'not being is' and proving that 'being' cannot exist. His essay apparently invites us to resign ourselves to ignorance. It argues that it is impossible to know or communicate anything that really 'is'. Clearly Gorgias is somewhat dissatisfied with the Eleatic assumption that *is* has a necessarily existential meaning and can be used only of existents. He makes *is* deliberately and consistently counter-existential in the course of his arguments. Did he have an intuition that there was more to the verb 'to be' than the assertion of existence, of undeniable being? If he did, he did not refine it into gleaming visibility as his dialectical gifts would surely have permitted. Or at least he did not care to.

He realised that non-existent things can be thought about, but instead of developing this promising idea, he paired it with the antilogic conclusion that existent things consequently cannot be thought of.

True he rejects Parmenides' assertion of the identity of saying, thinking, being (Kerferd, 1981, p. 99). He stresses that things thought are not of the same kind as things that are. He separates *logoi* (arguments, statements) from the subject matter *logoi* describe; his opinion is that by means of *logos* all you can impart is *logos*, not 'reality'. Yet *logoi* are the media of his dialectic, and they must therefore be assumed by him to carry some conviction; though perhaps that this conviction would be explained by him as a matter of persuasiveness rather than truth-value. His separation of *logoi* from the contents to which they refer, like the various discussions amongst the Sophists about the correctness and applicability of names, perhaps shows a latent consciousness that logical statements need not refer to realities in order to be true. His statement about non-existent and fantastic things being possible subjects of thought, and his opinion about the separation between *logos* and its subject matter, make him seem to be on the brink of some such discovery. However we should be cautious not to read too much into his fragmentary remarks.

Sextus Empiricus criticised him together with Protagoras for having removed the *kriterion* or standard of judgement (*Adv. Math.* 7.65), with the result that no means was left of establishing what was true. However, in his own way Gorgias seems to use *logos* to serve this function. Nor do I believe Isocrates is fair to Gorgias when he says that whereas Parmenides and Melissus thought that being was one, Gorgias reduced it to 'nothing' (Isocrates, *Antidosis* 268-9). I do not think that Gorgias was a nihilist; but rather that he was a man acutely aware of the difficulties involved in a theory of 'being' that had to be derived from Eleatic first principles. He could or would substitute no new theory himself. His position of dialectically active ignorance may remind us somewhat of Socrates.

Aristophanes says that Prodicus was a *meteorosophistes*, an expert in celestial phenomena; but this is no guarantee that he was especially interested in the physical world, let alone a formulation of what lies beyond it as a single or plural first cause or causes. The comic poet simply makes it clear that the Sophists (including Socrates) and physical as distinct from theistic interpretations of the universe were closely associated in the public mind. That is something, but it does not inform us about any opinions Prodicus may have entertained about reality.

In the case of Hippias, I suggested (Chapter 2) that there was reason to look suspiciously at the attribution to him (on the evidence of Plato's *Hippias Major* 301b) of a theory that reality was continuous.

At the same time, we bear in mind that he was a reputed expert on Thales, who maintained that everything in the world was a transformation of the world's first cause, water. Prodicus may have had a view of the nature of being that was influenced by Ionian scientific theory of this kind. But the Platonic reference does not prove it.

Antiphon was interested in physical and astronomical problems. The second book of his *Aletheia* (Truth) also seems to show the influence of Ionian theories of the universe. Possibly he regarded nature (*physis*) as prime 'being' rather than a primary environmental and behavioural complex unimpeded by human arrangements of law and convention. If one were to bury a wooden bed, he says, a tree would spring up from its rotten material, not a bed (Aristotle, *Physics* 193a 9). Nature's forms differ from ours. Antiphon said that words were pieces of legislation (*nomothemata*) imposed on nature (Hippocrates, *De Arte* 2). This might imply the view that nature is a distinct level of being. It suggests a separation between language and reality; but we cannot assess precisely the significance to be attributed to it.

If the quotation from Hippocrates' *De Arte* 2 genuinely represents Antiphon — it is associated with his fragments by several editors following the example of Diels-Kranz — then he contrasts words which are more *nomothemata* with classes (*eide*) which are natural growths (*blastemata*). This could suggest that he accepted the existence of a reality ordered by natural classes or kinds, and this would be a plural rather than a singular reality.

Recall Lycophron's problem with the verb 'is' (Chapter 3). He ceased to use it because he was worried by the prospect of predicating 'many' of a subject which was 'one'. His problem resides in the character of the verb 'to be', as he and many of his predecessors understood it. The verb 'to be' carried with it an unavoidable implication of 'being' in the sense of 'real existence'. When you said 'Socrates is white' you were saying, according to this ancient way of thinking, that 'Socrates exists' as 'white exists' and both are on the same level of existing and indeed must be identical. Aristotle made it clear that 'is' in a predicative sentence like this merely links an attribute to the subject and confers no ontological status of any particular importance upon the attribute. But he had organised the manifold meanings of the verb 'to be'. In spite of this, the old 'existential' flavour of this verb persistently haunted the arguments of early Cynics and several sub-species of Socratics during the fourth century BC.

Parmenides is sometimes thought to be the source of this uncompromising meaning of 'to be'. Nothing, he said, could be said of being,

except 'it is'. He seemed to regard being as some sort of ontological lump, of which you could only say one thing, that 'it is'. Recently it has become fashionable to diminish Parmenides' ontological preoccupation. It has been suggested that since there is no reliable distinction to be found in Greek use of 'to be' between its existential meanings and its service as a 'link' or copula, the isolation of an exclusively existential meaning in expressions like Parmenides' 'being is' becomes hard to sustain (Kahn, 1966; Kerferd, 1981, pp. 94-5). Yet there is little reason to doubt that Parmenides did see 'is' as asserting existence, and was interested in the notion of being that was immune from characteristics fitted to it by predicative expressions.

The influence of this view of 'being' which may even go back beyond Parmenides to the Ionian physiologoi (West, 1971, pp. 218-19) was an impediment to the growth of logic. In particular it was an obstacle to accepting clearly differentiated positive and negative in statements. Never shall it be said, declared Parmenides, that not being is. The use of the negative was blighted in statements about 'being/not being' because the negative could have no existential standing, and hence no logical standing. It seemed to speak not merely of something that was not there, but of something that necessarily should not be there.

Since this discriminating function of the negative, essential to competent logic, was not developed, logic was imprisoned in crude anti-logic, eristic and paradoxes such as *ouk estin antilegein*, 'it is impossible to contradict'. It is impossible to contradict in a world in which whatever you can think or say must have some existential claim to 'be' — otherwise you could not have thought or said it. Nevertheless, negative sentences had to be used in the natural language in which rhetoric and dialectic as well as ordinary conversations were conducted.

Protagoras and Gorgias, in their different ways, struggled against some of the restrictions imposed upon them by the universe of argument which they had helped to create. They, and Antiphon, showed glimmerings of awareness that might have led them to more spacious philosophical environments. Their interest in the problem of 'being' carried them up to the boundary of professional expediency, but not beyond it. Perhaps others, whose views on these questions we do not know, shared their curiosity. However theirs was not a dedicated philosophical curiosity, but merely a contingent of their lively and inventive minds.

6 THUCYDIDES: SOPHISTIC METHOD AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Sophos, *sophisma* and *sophistes* each occur only once in Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian war. None of the meanings is favourable. Yet this writer of remarkable genius, whose work still ranks amongst the most distinguished and useful examples of historical and political analysis, shows in many ways that he was influenced by the Sophists.

His life is known in outline but obscure in details. He was of aristocratic family, probably a relative of Thucydides son of Melesias, who was an opponent of Pericles. His father's name was Olorus, a name which itself indicates ties of blood and affinity with the people of Thrace where the family had property and goldmining interests. Thucydides' life span was probably 460-400 BC. His account of the war stops at 411 BC. One extant continuation of his work is Xenophon's *Hellenica*; another is the anonymous *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* of the fourth century BC. From the same century we have fragments of another continuator, Theopompus of Chios.

A career in politics which was initially successful brought him command of Athenian naval forces in the Thracian region. For some reason, military incompetence perhaps, or a reluctance to leave his Thracian properties unguarded, he and his force failed to arrive in time to save from being taken Amphipolis, the key Athenian base in Chalcidike. On the motion of the demagogic politician Cleon, Thucydides was exiled for twenty years in 424 BC. This, as he drily tells us, gave him ample opportunities for research.

Protagoras, Thrasymachus and Antiphon certainly influenced his work. During his exile his contact with the intellectual life of Athens could only have been indirect and intermittent; but the importance of personal association can be exaggerated.

Even before books were circulated in great numbers, ideas travelled with surprising speed. Perhaps in an attempt to explain Gorgianic influences in Thucydides' speeches, Philostratus (*Vit. Soph.* 1.91) says that Gorgias influenced Thucydides and Pericles even when they were quite old. There are many expressions in Thucydides' work that seem to recall Gorgias. The famous sentence from Pericles' funeral oration, *philokaloumen met euteleias, philosophoumen aneu malakias* (2. 40) contains parallelisms, *homoeoteleuton* (rhymed endings),

antithetic balance and epigrammatic compression associated with Gorgias: 'We are enthusiasts of beauty without being extravagant; we pursue wisdom without being indolent'. Since Gorgias was not a continuing presence in Athens until 427 BC when he came as leader of a diplomatic mission from Leontini, there have been doubts that his developments of style directly influenced Thucydides. However, we can refer to the swiftness with which new inventions and techniques travel by a kind of intellectual osmosis as an explanation of the Gorgianisms. We may also bear in mind that the composition of his history was spread over the greater portion of Thucydides' life from 432 BC until his death in 400 BC.

Gorgianic themes would have plenty of time to permeate his style during this long period of literary construction. We obviously accept Gorgias' influence, even though the school of stylists that were the master's direct heirs did not approve of Thucydides' style. Isocrates (5.143) describes it as being hard to listen to. Other critics found it admirable. Cicero, who was no bad judge in such matters, praises its astonishing compression and swiftness, and remarks on the coincidence of ideas and words in a blend that almost unifies form and content (Cicero, *De Oratore* 2. 56). Nevertheless, apart from special characteristics which are the properties of Thucydides' genius, this style owes many of its effects to the Sophists I have mentioned, and also to Prodicus' insistence upon nice discriminations in the meanings of apparently synonymous words.

Thucydides intended to create a lasting work of historical and political science, a possession for ever (*ktēma es aei*), not an epideictic speech for a single occasion (*agonisma es to parachrema*) (1.22). He set out to establish an overwhelming case for the proposition that the Peloponnesian war, which raged in two main phases between 432-403 BC, was the greatest war of all time with the most far-reaching effects upon the inhabited world. In making out such an argument he is, in spite of his disclaimer, setting himself the task of composing an epideictic *logos* on a stupendous scale. Although this work claims to speak to all time rather than, let us say, a gathering at the Olympic games, it has the character of rhetoric in that it is designed to persuade by means of *logos*.

In Thucydides' view, the fact that he has so great a subject to discuss and does not envisage his audience as mere inhabitants of the restricted contemporary time-scale, defines the concept of what he intends and puts his work into an entirely different category from that of Herodotus, Hellanicus or Hippias. We may agree or disagree. In the

nineteenth century L. Spengel compared Thucydides' histories to a work of classical sculpture, standing outside the particularities of time, place and individual. Plato's *eide* may also provide analogues for universal intent of this history of conflict between two massive aggregates of military and economic power. The *eidos* is a real entity standing outside our world of fluent time and change; by its very nature as detached and unalloyed reality it informs us, and enables us to understand the transient and recurrent phenomena of our world of experience.

I decided not to write down the events that took place in the war simply on the basis of some random eye-witness account, or merely in accordance with my own view of the situation. I have given an account of events that I saw for myself or heard of from others after as careful an enquiry as possible. This was a matter of some difficulty because eye-witnesses to events did not give the same account of the same happening, but told only what they personally remembered, or they were biased by loyalty to one of the two sides. Perhaps the absence of mythological colour [in my history] will make it unpleasant to hear. But if people who want to know what in fact happened and what will happen again given human nature [*kata to anthropeion*] in much the same way some time in the future, find my account helpful, that will be good enough. This is not part of an exhibition lecture series, but a possession for all time [*a ktema* not an *agonismia*]. (Thucydides 1.22, 2-4)

The last sentence snipes at Herodotus (c. 490 to c. 420 BC) whose brilliant talks (which became his histories) aim to entertain and edify rather than scientifically inform. Note also how Thucydides feels his narrative may not be agreeable 'to hear'. He does not say 'to read'. The oral tradition is still strong. Nevertheless, he does mean his work to be read, not recited, for he envisages its survival over long future periods which may or may not provide charismatic reciters.

However, the most important point he makes in this is about human nature as a criterion of probability for the recurrence of events. As a constant, *to anthropeion* (the human factor or human nature) is likely to bear the same fruit in realised events, one hundred, or two thousand years, from the time when the history was written. No evidence available to him suggests that human nature will change. Man's nature has always been the same and has always implied a number of probable or likely actions and attitudes. Thucydides often suggests that human

nature with its potential exfoliation into probable effects represents an important criterion for judging the meaning of historical events. He makes frequent references to humanity in general (*anthropoi* 'men', 'people'). When these *anthropoi* are the subject of a sentence the historian is talking about that which is humanly probable. He also uses *eikos*. This is to be distinguished somewhat from the *eikos* which is concerned with arguments and utterances and rhetoric. It is more general, and relates to the constant character of our species that leads to repetition of acts and experiences.

Let us turn for a moment to Thucydides' remarks about the fallibility of eye-witnesses. This theme is not original in Thucydides but has antecedents. We might expect this to be so in a question of warfare and the observation of battles. Greek city states were constantly engaged in warfare. This however is the first clear expression of the problem. Thucydides also uses the fact that individual perceptions of battles are varied and partial in order to add to the horror of the account he gives of the great sea battle between the Athenian and Syracusan sea forces in Sicily (Thucydides 7.71). He describes the encounter from the point of view of land forces watching from the shore: according to their point of observation different individuals and groups saw victory, defeat or stalemate for their particular side. Nobody saw the whole battle.

Should we be reminded here of Protagoras' principle that man is the measure of what is, what is not? That truth is relative to the perceiver of events in an outer world about which there can indeed be agreements but no objective certainty? Only in a limited sense, if at all, should we allow Protagorean influence here. Thucydides is prepared, unlike Protagoras and other relativistic thinkers, to seek an objective reality that lies beyond the variety of mere perception. He does not think that truth and accuracy are easily attained; but he does not regard their attainment as being outside the scope of human ability. His view is that our notions and impressions though they are varied, relative to ourselves, liable to our errors and individual differences of standpoint and intelligence, are the raw data from which critical intelligence can extract the truth.

For his task Thucydides marshalled as much information as possible over years of enquiry. He absorbed techniques of expression, style and argument from the great Sophists of the period and welded them into his own unique mode of discourse. Like the Sophists, he was deliberately applying art to subject matter but, as we have seen, his aim was accurate elucidation, not a flash of plausible conviction in his hearers

or profit for himself. He applies certain categories to his material as tests and measures to estimate its validity: *to saphes* the accurate truth of a situation, is what he principally seeks: *eikos*, probability, an old yardstick of rhetorical origins for estimating events; two kinds of causation (which we shall mention again) *aitia*, alleged cause, *prophasis*, the manifest or genuine cause of an event. In the flux of human affairs, *tyche*, fortune, was another modifier of judgement. This was especially taken into account, sometimes with excessive optimism, he suggests, by those about to embark on military or political projects. Thucydides' use of it is not theistic: he does not personify Tyche as a goddess. Tyche is the unknown factor, and in the realm of human judgement it is related to hope or fear rather than calculation.

The 'agonistic' element comes into Thucydides' work in a way that has little to do with the *agonisma* we have discussed. Protagoras, it is said, was the first to devise *agones* or dialectical disputes; but we know that the competitive arguments, disputes and conflicts are deeply rooted in Greek culture. Both tragedy (and comedy) and the dialectic of the Sophists are products of this agonistic strain.

It may have its origins in a heroic world; certainly it was fostered by heroic competitiveness in characters of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, who remained important components in Greek education. It is no surprise that tragedy and sophistic argument and oratory influence each other in this respect; or that both show traces of their influence in Thucydides. Competition, dispute, war, are a Greek continuum: 'War,' said Heraclitus (D-K 53 44B), 'is the father of all, the king of all: some it makes gods, some it makes men; it enslaves some — it liberates others.' Humanity has a natural tendency to involve itself in conflict (2.61, 1). Man's conflict with himself and with the gods; his attempts to break the bounds imposed upon him by the human condition and divine ordinance, his conflict with fellow citizens; these conflicts are made manifest in Attic tragedy, the most important and sophisticated literary art form of the fifth century BC. The ingredients of tragedy occur frequently in the vicissitudes of both sides in the Peloponnesian war. Even if they did not, it would be difficult to imagine that a writer of a major work in any literary genre in the fifth century BC could fail to be influenced by tragedy. Thucydides shows this influence in the dramatic confrontations he sets up between orators contending on behalf of the two hostile sides at crucial points in the narrative of the war. The Melian dialogue, which we shall discuss shortly, is of a tragic as much as a dialectical character.

In order to illustrate some characteristics of Thucydides' history

that relate to the intellectual movement of his own working lifetime, I have decided upon a few obvious but poignant examples; the Mitylene debate, the revolution (*stasis*) in Corcyra, and the Melian dialogue. It would be impossible within the scope of this book to quote all of these episodes in full, so I have merely presented what seems to me to be typical passages. Reading the full text of these episodes is still a substantial contribution to political understanding. Reading all of Thucydides is strongly recommended. It is an education in itself.

The dramatic tension of these episodes is undeniable, but it is not therefore to be regarded as artificial. Contrast, drama and debate are universal Greek phenomena: so is a high level of intensity and excitement.

Before we consider the three episodes, it will be reasonable to discuss briefly the most famous speech in the whole history, Pericles' funeral oration. It is a celebration of Athenian political and cultural power. Pericles' arguments make Athens seem to be the most achieved and brilliant of civilised cities. She is almost personalised as a living being: in fact he recommends his fellow citizens to be in love with her and to give her all their devotion and loyalty. This characterisation of something which on a human level could be a tragic heroine is probably deliberately organised to precede only shortly an account of the terrible plague that killed so many of her citizens, including Pericles himself. The unfolding events of the painfully protracted war involve instances, like Mitylene and Melos, in which Athens falls into *hybris* which brings its own terrible consequences of defeat. It is possible to over-emphasise this tragic aspect of Thucydides. F.M. Cornford, one of the most distinguished writers in this century on Greek philosophy, wrote a provocative, youthful book in which he pressed home the tragic analogy too vigorously: *Thucydides Mythistoricus* (London, 1912). That aspect certainly is present, but Thucydides' main purpose is the elucidation of the greatest war of all time, not an extended tale of *hybris* uncomfortably fulfilled, like Herodotus' overall theme of Darius' and Xerxes' defeats in the Persian wars of 490 and 480 BC. If we wish to grasp the difference between the intension of speeches of tragedy and those that Thucydides counterposes with dramatic skill, the following will be of some assistance.

It is very difficult for me to give a precise account of speeches made by each of the contending parties either about to go to war or already in a state of war. This applies both to reports given directly to me and also to information conveyed to me from some less direct

source. My policy has been to adhere as closely as possible to the general truth of what was said; but to set down in particular what in my view each speaker was required to say by the character of the particular crisis that confronted him. (Thucydides 1.22, 1-2)

There has been discussion about the precise meaning of what each speaker was required to say (Winnington Ingram, 1965). The Greek literally says 'speak the necessary or "needed" things (*tadeonta*)'. There is little doubt, however, that Thucydides has in mind the words and ideas most appropriate to the subject in hand.

Thucydides was no enthusiastic democrat, but he gave his approval to Athenian democracy when it was firmly under the control of Pericles. The funeral oration that he attributes to Pericles in his second book illustrates his attitude. So also does his summing up of Pericles' career after the latter's death (2.65). Thucydides was able to accept democracy in this form; but he distrusted the aggressive irrationalism of democracy led by demagogues like Cleon or Cleobulus. The characterisation of democracy in the funeral oration which Pericles made over the dead of the first year of the Peloponnesian war, shows that Thucydides has precise views about its definition:

We have a constitution which does not compete with the laws of neighbouring states. Rather than imitating them, we provide the example. Because our city is governed not by the few but by the majority, it is called a democracy. Everybody has equal status before the law in private law suits. With regard to public distinction, it is a question of the individual's merit, not the class of society to which he belongs, how much he is honoured. Nobody is excluded from a political career on grounds of poverty or the obscurity of his social background. (2.37, 1-2)

Pericles' exposition of democracy (and no doubt Thucydides') owes something to Protagoras' view that man is the measure of all things, with its implication that every man's perception of the state's needs has some value. Not every man has something of value to contribute: some men have. Protagoras did not allow that some men's apprehension of the world was truer than that of others; but some men's apprehensions of the world were, he admitted, better.

We differ from the majority of people in our notion of excellence of conduct (*arete*). We make friends not by receiving benefits but

by conferring them. The man who does a favour is a firmer friend because he maintains a sense of obligation in the person he has benefited by his continued policy of goodwill. The man who owes for a favour received knows that when he returns it, this will merely be the repayment of a debt and not a favour conferred. It is with confidence in our own generosity of spirit rather than a calculation of future benefits that we liberally offer our help to people. (2.40, 4)

I invite you to compare these sentiments with those uttered in the Melian dialogue later in this chapter.

Lesbos was, with Chios, an ally of Athens that remained autonomous and had not sunk to the level of tribute-paying satellite. After the plague that afflicted Athens in 430 BC she seemed less formidable to her allies and subjects, and the oligarchic party in the Lesbian cities, which was hostile to Athenian dominance, began to negotiate with Sparta. The oligarchs of Mitylene probably intended to bring all the cities of Lesbos under the power of their arm, a prospect that had very little attraction for the Athenians. Sparta blew hot and cold with her potential new allies; Athenian fleets came and went, and in the course of the next two years the situation deteriorated into warfare between cities and political groups. The two major powers sought their own interests. Lesbos had become formally a member of the Peloponnesian Alliance, but this newly established closeness with Sparta had not yet paid any substantial dividend; though there were promises of aid, and a Spartan agent, Sataethos, was smuggled in. The Athenians had at last mounted an effective blockade of the place, which fell into Athenian hands more as the result of a quarrel between the democratic and anti-democratic factions within the city than by effective siegecraft. The Peloponnesian fleet arrived too late to be of effective help against the Athenian force.

The Athenian assembly in an outburst of fury decided that all the adult male population of Mitylene should be executed, and the women and children sold into slavery. A trireme was sent to Mitylene with orders to carry the decision into effect. Next day there was a sense of revulsion and regret in Athens at the haste of the assembly's cruel decision, and a new debate on the question was called.

Thucydides gives an account of the events leading up to this stage in the early chapters of his third book. His account of the debate whether to rescind the order is notable for its use of arguments that bear the colour of sophistic influence.

In 3.36 he mentions that Cleon was the main supporter of the decision to execute the male population of Mitylene and enslave the women and children. He describes Cleon as the most violent of the citizens, and the one who carried greatest persuasive power with the people at that time.

Cleon argues with brutal naturalism that if a democracy is to rule over citizens of other places it needs to behave like a dictator, for it cannot effectively do it pursuing democratic ways (3.37, 1-2):

You are not aware that your empire is really a dictatorial rule [*tyrannis*] and you rule people who are unwilling to endure it, and are ready to plot against you; who do not acquiesce in your rule because of the benefits they receive from you, but over whom you retain your dominance by sheer force rather than because of their loyalty.

He speaks as Callicles is made to speak in Plato's *Gorgias*. We are reminded of the nihilism of Critias, and the despair of Thrasymachus that justice really can be done. Cleon is speaking for power as the prevalent natural factor in human affairs. His advice springs from an understanding of what is 'natural' and has nothing to do with elaborately humane attitudes enshrined in law.

Cleon is speaking like a Sophist, and a Sophist whose arguments have brought him to an anti-intellectual position:

The thing that worries me the most is the prospect of none of our decisions remaining firm, if we remain unaware that a city with inferior laws that are never infringed is in a more powerful position than a city with good laws that have no authority. Ignorance accompanied by common sense is more beneficial to a city than volatile brilliance. Stupid people on the whole run their cities better than those who are clever. Clever people always want to be cleverer than the laws and to shine in debate. (3.37, 3-5)

He goes on in this style, praising obtuseness in a very subtle speech approving the steadiness of the slow-witted. Power is more important than justice or decency. A decision must not be changed no matter how bad it is, in case change of mind incurs the charge of weakness. The most distinguished example of the unintellectual state which never changes its laws or its decisions and never falls into the error of debate

is not mentioned. It is Sparta, whose traditional and primitive constitutional features became a symbol of what was politically 'natural' for Socratics like Antisthenes and for some of the Cynics. Even Plato's *Republic*, in outlining a constitution that would be more true to nature and therefore essentially true, introduces adaptations of Spartan customs. Without having to argue the matter, Sparta pursues a policy based upon the natural motivations of survival and dominance. Sparta does not need a Callicles or a Cleon to educate her in this policy.

Cleon's criticism of the Athenian citizen-body's propensity to be swayed by skilled and attractive oratory rather than to make judgement according to the hard facts of a situation, is to some extent justified. Thucydides makes him a persuasive orator, well able to use words in order to convince his hearers that words are less significant than facts. Cleon is given a general opportunity to criticise the effects of the intellectual movement, especially the development of oratory, upon Athenian political life. In 3.38 he accuses the Athenians of being willing only to be persuaded by elegant speeches, of being enslaved to clever paradox.

Each of you wants to be an orator, or at least to enter into competition with orators by anticipating their witticisms. You praise somebody's epigram before it is uttered, and you are as quick in your appreciation of speeches as you are slow in foreseeing the consequences of those speeches. You want to dwell in a different world from that of real life and are not concerned with the immediate problems. You are devoted to the delights of hearing speeches, sitting like an audience listening to Sophists rather than people making decisions about politics. (3.38, 5-7)

Mitylene (429-427 BC)

The year is 427 BC, the year when Gorgias came to Athens. Thucydides wrote the speech he attributes to Cleon some time after this, and put in this topical allusion. It may seem strange that he makes Cleon speak as if he were sophistically trained; which in fact he was not. Thucydides deliberately does not use plain representational methods in his writing. He makes Cleon speak in the same style as other orators. Even his Spartans make speeches in which there are rhetorical devices that remind us of the Sophists. If his history of the war is to have a usefulness unrelated to time, it must be in an abstract style without

localisms or vulgarities. This criticism of the effect of the intellectual movement on the processes by which the Athenian state made its major decisions is no doubt sincere. It does not mean that Thucydides himself was anti-intellectual, but rather that he objected to intellectualism that led to a divorce between technique and subject matter, form and content, words and reality.

Cleon's defence of a cruel decision simply because it was decided and to unmake it would seem feeble, has been a favourite argument of rulers and administrators throughout the centuries; just as it was even before Cleon's time. It is part of the common psychology of power. His argument about the general problem of a democracy like Athens trying to rule an empire is very perceptive. Imperial power is usually resented, whether or not it is oppressive in its methods of rule.

More than mere sentiment was needed to counter these two main points of Cleon's speech. A man called Diodotus provided what was necessary: arguments of harsh realism which yet ran counter to those that Cleon used.

Diodotus criticises Cleon by implication (3.42, 43) when he declares that disrespect for the man who skilfully deploys words to express a policy is foolish and probably disingenuous. An unhealthy consequence of such an attitude would be that even the best and most sincere advice, if it happened to be well expressed, would merely bring suspicion on its giver. The state would be deprived of its best advisers because they would be afraid to open their mouths.

The really effective speaker does not try to deceive his hearers by means of deceptive trickery, but uses good argument. Mere oratory does not provide good grounds for giving honour to a speaker; that would incite him to brilliant speeches that had no particular usefulness apart from gaining him popularity. Both the suspicion and the excessive subtlety with which speeches are received have reached such a pitch that a real danger is arising that the city will get no good advice at all.

Diodotus speaks at apparently disproportionate length about the nature of political speech-making in relation to policy and the Athenians' jealous attitude of hypercriticism to speakers in the assembly. He is in substantial agreement with Cleon on the question of the perils arising from too close an attention being paid to the manner and style and the possible hidden motivations of the speaker, rather than the helpfulness or otherwise of his words in terms of practical politics in the real world. But he is at the same time suggesting that Cleon's speech is directed to an intensification of that sensitive cynical

suspicion in order to procure the result that the Athenians, for fear they should err through unrealistic softness, shall remain firmly by their original harsh decision about the fate of Mitylene. Representing his own side, namely those who, along with the ambassadors from Mitylene, have been pressing for the decision to be changed, Diodotus uses the same methods of innuendo and indeed, the same kind of persuasive sophistic technique, to undermine the sophistic speech in which Cleon discounts Sophistry and its malign influence on sensible politics.

It is an exercise in dialectic, with two skilled practitioners opposed to each other, each doing his best to prove that his own case is not unduly soft and merciful, but is practical, expedient, and will produce an advantageous outcome. Of course, expediency is underwritten by the argument of nature, as distinct from man's artificial agreements on how people shall live together in society. Cleon argues for the essential legality as well as the expediency of the 'natural' retributiveness of his proposal. Diodotus argues for the expediency of pursuing a policy that seems more like the traditional avoidance of excess that characterises the rule of law, conventions and agreement amongst human beings. He knows that direct appeal to these civilised values would have no effect upon the Athenians in the mood of furious resentment and fear with which they presently view the Mityleneans. And we have to remember they have understandable grounds for fearing the consequences of a merciful course of inaction, rather than logically cogent slaughter. Diodotus has to persuade them by means of their notion of their own toughness. He, like Creon, argues his case disingenuously, but with a show of frankness.

He says (3.44) that he is neither for the Mityleneans nor opposed to Cleon's view (both of which propositions come under the heading of disingenuousness). The important question, he says, is not the wrong the people of Mitylene have done, but what is the best policy from the Athenian point of view? Cleon's argument that the infliction of a wholesale death penalty will deter others from similar action, is wrong. Diodotus suggests that this narrow legalism (so he designates a proposal which has no legal basis at all) is irrelevant. He flatters the Athenians' concept of their own intellectual hardness by setting aside the question of right or wrong. A more important question is how are the Athenians going to make the Mityleneans useful to them?

The death penalty is subjected to a general discussion (Chapter 45) which has something of the sound of an epideictic speech by a Sophist; more discursive than practical in its treatment of the subject. In a

psychologising vein he dwells on the influence of human nature upon actions. Human nature is prone to error. It is influenced by desire which promotes hope, and hope leads on to undertakings based merely on a false estimate of good fortune. Motives vary: poverty can urge people to boldness; so too can confidence nurtured by prosperity. Death has never been an effective deterrent, because people think that fortune (tyche) will smile on their projects even though it has frowned on others. The factors motivating human conduct are far too varied for death to constitute a simple deterrent. Human nature is more complex than that.

The death penalty imposed upon the Mityleneans was a departure from Athenian policy in these cases. In fact it had no basis in legality or precedent. Diodotus reminds the Athenians (Chapter 46) that according to their established policy an allied city that had revolted from their rule could come to an agreement with them at a certain stage when it realised that it was not likely to win. If such a city were to find itself facing an inevitable death penalty for its transgression, it would not be prepared to consider a compromise at any stage but would fight on to the bitter end, causing the Athenians much more trouble and expense, and at the same time destroying a potentially restorable asset of the Athenian empire. The Athenians in effect would be punishing themselves if they were to carry out Cleon's suggestion. There was also (Chapter 47) the danger of alienating the democratic faction in all the subject cities if they saw the *demos* of Mitylene falling under such heavy punishment. The *demos* of Mitylene was not responsible for the revolt, and in killing fellow democrats the Athenians would be killing friends and allies.

By this kind of argument Diodotus narrowly persuaded the Athenian assembly to cancel the order to carry out the excessively severe penalty it had previously voted. But the Mityleneans were not treated leniently. They suffered seizure of land for Athenian colonists, and the dismantling of many local powers and institutions. The burden no doubt fell heaviest upon the oligarchs who instigated the revolt, but it is credible that considerable numbers of the *demos* suffered also. A thousand of the prime movers of the revolt who had been brought to Athens were executed.

In the speeches of Cleon and Diodotus we see two 'Sophists' arguing a set proposition with great skill. They are not arguing epideictic cases for the purposes of instruction or entertainment. They are talking about the fate of thousands of people. Thucydides is using the achievements in argumentative skill of the sophistic movement to examine a

historical situation that actually came about; and at the same time, he uses the analytical resources developed by the Sophists most effectively to underline some of the dangers to true understanding that could arise from these resources themselves. Like a Socratic dialogue, this confrontation informs us about the medium as well as the subject matter of the discussion.

Corcyra (427-425 BC)

Foreign intervention was nothing new in a city state's affairs. It took the form of aid for one or other parties to a *stasis* (for which 'revolutionary factional confrontation' would seem nearly an adequate translation but I shall usually say simply 'revolution' or 'stasis'). There was hardly such a thing as a Greek city state whose population was united and homogenous in its loyalties. Such a phenomenon scarcely came within the scope of experience. It need not seem strange to us that Plato, in outlining the scheme for a model constitution in his *Republic*, proposed that there should be a force of 'auxiliaries' (*epikouroi*) to protect the city from enemies both within and outside its boundary. Protection from internal enemies was continuous with protection from foreign attack. Plato saw no need to distinguish categorically between the two. It certainly was no novelty to Thucydides; but the point he is making about Corcyran *stasis* is the scale and intensity and the widespread occurrence subsequently of the atrocities that were committed. Just as the Peloponnesian war was the biggest of all wars up to this time, so the *stasis* which it brought about in the various cities was proportionately savage and terrible. With two 'imperial' systems locked in conflict, the waging of war by internal subversion became more frequent and almost systematic. Previous instances of *stasis* had seen terrible acts, but somehow the horror had been incidental. The dreadful desecration of the closest family ties and of the sanctity of temples, which Thucydides describes, are the stuff of tragedy. But he shows how these things became too savage and frequent to be tragic in feeling: not tragedies but atrocities. Tragedies concern individuals; here we merely have foul incidents multiplied.

In the course of the seven days in which Eurymedon remained there with his sixty ships, the democratic factions of Corcyra continuously kept up the slaughter of those who could be made to seem enemies. Generally they killed them on the grounds that they were

enemies of the democracy; but some individuals committed murders motivated only by private hatred, and there were others who took the opportunity of getting rid of those to whom they owed money. Every kind of death was to be seen; nothing was omitted from the atrocities that usually happen in such a condition of affairs. Indeed, even worse things than this were perpetrated. There were instances of fathers killing sons; men were dragged out from the protective sanctuary of temples and butchered close by; some were even walled up in Dionysus' temple and left there to die.

This was the pitch of cruelty achieved in a revolution which seemed worse for the very reason that it was amongst the first to break out. For it is true to say that later on almost the whole Greek world was thrown into turmoil when revolution occurred in each city due to the leaders of the democratic parties calling in the Athenians to help them; while on the other hand the oligarchic party summoned the Spartans to their aid. (3.81, 3.82, 1)

Although in peacetime people would neither have had the pretext nor the inclination to call in foreign powers, now that the two major states with their respective alliances were at war, desire to injure opponents and promote their own cause made those who had some revolutionary action in mind ready to procure external intervention.

As a consequence of revolution many terrible events took place in the various city states. These are things which happen and always will happen as long as human nature is the same [*he aute physis anthropon*]. They will assume a milder form and differ in character in relation to the different circumstances of their respective causation. For example, when there is peace and prosperity cities and individuals are of more gentle temper because they are not pressed by unwelcome imperatives. War deprives them of their daily well-being and in the guise of a hard schoolmaster shapes the attitudes of people to the likeness of the harsh prospects that confront them. (3.82, 1-3)

Thucydides begins to draw particular events into a general scheme to account for stasis, its causes and consequences. The pattern of events he describes is the product of 'human nature'. Like the Sophists he regards this as the underlying source of motivation for actions. Perhaps we should be reminded particularly of Antiphon's views by Thucydides' implication that the events characteristic of stasis represent

a kind of constant in human social and political relationship. Also of interest is the psychological parallel implied in this passage between state and individual ('cities and individuals are of more gentle temper'). This parallel is worked out in great detail and with a different emphasis in Plato's *Republic*. Power conflict and competition are seen to be inevitable in human society: the same phenomena procede from unchanging human nature in peace as in war: the difference is only of the degree of mutual strife, not its character.

A wave of revolution spread over the city states of Greece. Cities that were later affected benefited from reports of earlier events and reached an extraordinary pitch of ingenuity in the invention of methods of attack and the weirdness of the revenges that were exacted. People changed the relation of words to things as they thought fit. For example, mindless daring was regarded as courageous solidarity; prudent delay became whitewashed cowardice; moderation was merely a front for lack of manly quality; to have a comprehensive understanding was to be comprehensively indecisive. Manic aggressiveness was thought to be the distinguishing mark of a brave man; to be cautious and deliberate was merely a plausible excuse for doing nothing. The extremist was always credible; his opponent was regarded with suspicion. The man who constructed a conspiracy was acknowledged to be clever; but anybody who suspected a conspiracy in the making was even more astute. Whoever made his plans so that he would have no need of such measures was considered to be subversive of party unity and frightened of the enemy. Praise was given to any man who anticipated another in the perpetration of some evil, and also to anybody who persuaded a person to do evil who had never thought of doing so. Indeed the ties of blood relationship seemed more alien than those of party, because the latter more readily promoted unhesitating boldness in action. These party groupings did not develop in order to support the established laws, but to promote the greedy interests of the party leaders. The bonds between party members were regulated not by the law of the gods, but rather by a sense of shared transgression of this law. (5.82, 3-7)

This analysis of revolution has never been superceded. Thucydides builds it up from materials derived from sophistic teaching which he specially applies to the illustration of a societal malady in which men follow unregenerate *physis* rather than rationally agreed rules of

behaviour such as are *nomoi*. They are activated by the Calliclean *nomos physeos* (Plato, *Gorgias* 483e, 3), which is eternally valid, as the Athenians later point out to the people of Melos (*Thucydides* 5.105, 2). Events and actions prompted by *physis* are harmonised with language so that they have the specious respectability of usage. Whether in Thucydides' view these events and actions have had true and exclusive names naturally belonging to them in non-revolutionary times, or merely names agreed upon by convention (*nomos*), we are not told. What we are told is that the names used of certain deeds in peace time are deliberately changed so that people can proceed with *physis* — prompted actions comforted by *nomos*-style nomenclature. This two-fold description of events and attitudes illustrates vividly the influence of the relativism in Protagoras' *man/metron* doctrine and the viewpoint implied in the *Dissoi Logoi*. There is also Thucydides' use of *orthopeia*, the discrimination of 'names' particularly associated with the teaching of Prodicus. Instead of discriminating between nearly equivalent expressions, however, as Prodicus is made to do in his speech in Plato's *Protagoras* (84 D-K A13):

And when he had spoken, Prodicus said, 'I admire your speech Callias; in discussions of this kind the people present should be *common* hearers [*koinous*] of both parties not *equal* hearers [*isous*]. The two things are not the same. We have to listen to both *in common* but should not give *equal* approval to them, but move to the cleverer and less to the less learned. (337a-c4)

Thucydides advances two contrasting expressions each relating to the same psychopolitical phenomenon. He blends Protagorean relativism with Prodican nicety of speech. Prodicus was not interested merely in synonyma, but in finding the precise word and phrase to describe a thing. Marcellinus, as we have seen (Prodicus, Chapter 2 above), says that Thucydides' *arkribologia*, accuracy of speech, was the product of Prodicus' teaching.

Other notable examples of this influence are to be seen in Thucydides 1.23, 6 where 'manifest cause' (*alethestate prophasis*) is contrasted with 'ostensible pretexts' (*es to phaneron aitiai*); at 1.69, 6 we find *aitia* in another of its meanings, an accusation or complaint, distinguished from *kategoria*, a downright accusation; the former being capable of being directed against friends with whom one has a difference; the latter more appropriately applied to enemies. There are many other examples in Thucydides, and they represent an important

analytical factor in his investigation of events. These fine distinctions between meanings bring definition closer; they seek to identify precisely what has happened or is spoken of. Just as a sophistic orator would use this kind of device to make clearer that very point he wishes to persuade upon the jury, Thucydides uses it to illuminate for the wider audience of his readers some otherwise obscure situation or happening and also to convince them that his understanding of the matter is the correct and plausible one. As we have seen in the section of Chapter 2 that discusses Prodicus, Socrates also makes use of this narrow discrimination of meanings in order to pursue his purpose of definition. It is a basic element in *dialektike* leading to the developed Socratic-Platonic method of *diaeresis*, the separation of classes.

Thucydides' powerful description of the actions in the revolution in Corcyra and the motivations of their perpetrators, not only uses this search for correct expression as an investigative device, it implies that the shifts of meaning which sophistic teaching has made it possible to discern are themselves produced by the operation of natural forces within man. The new learning has made it possible for Thucydides to describe what has always been in the nature of mankind, but has not been properly understood because of lack of stylistic or linguistic facilities to describe it. He draws a terrible conclusion from the events in Corcyra: namely that the restraining influence of *nomos* has been irreparably broken down by them, and never will be the same again. Civilisation has been irreparably damaged:

Nobody would prefer revenge to righteousness or personal gain to restraint from committing injustice unless envy had infected him with its injurious influence. In the matter of exacting vengeance from others, people deliberately repeal the general laws about such matters upon which rests hope of salvation by all who have been affected by misfortune. These laws consequently remain inapplicable for the future when perhaps somebody in danger will need their protection. (3.84, 1-3)

Melos (416 BC)

During the Peloponnesian war the people of the large island of Melos had remained unwilling to join in alliance with Athens. As early as 426 BC the Athenians attempted to frighten them into subjection by a substantial raid; but this effort at international intimidation failed.

Presumptuously the Athenians placed Melos on the list of their allies in 425 BC and assessed it for tribute. The Melians would not pay. Their island was strong and prosperous. Its position in the eastern Mediterranean made it a desirable acquisition for Athens, the great sea power of the region. However, the Athenians so far were unable to entice or acquire it. This Dorian island cherished its independence, and such sentiments as its inhabitants entertained about the war tended to incline them towards the Spartans as fellow Dorians and original founders of their state.

In 416 BC the Athenians sent a powerful fleet to blockade the island. Thucydides has invented a discussion between Athenian representatives and the leading men of Melos in which both sides put forward arguments in support of their respective cases: the Athenians say that the Melians should submit to them, while the Melians say that they should be left in peace.

This is the famous 'Melian Dialogue', and it may properly be regarded as the earliest example we have of philosophical dialogue in a developed form; it has not yet broken completely its evolutionary bond with Greek tragedy. Its theme is like that which animates Callicles' speech in Plato's *Gorgias* with a lurid glow of ruthlessness and menace. It is also reminiscent of the dialogue between Antigone and Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Power is the substance of the Athenians' argument. Justice, then expediency of the higher second order kind like that propounded by Diodotus form the material of the Melians' inevitably defensive case.

It is difficult to believe that such a dialogue actually took place. As we know, the speeches in Thucydides are paired like those of litigants in court or characters in Attic tragedy; 'for' then 'against'; they have proof of their artificiality in the highly organised structure and style that characterises them. In the 'Melian Dialogue' the setting and the nature of the brief exchanges of arguments are intrinsically unconvincing as the descriptions of an incident. We cannot be absolutely certain that the actual negotiations did not assume some like or comparable form; but it is most improbable. Athenian delegates might argue in this fashion in 416 BC, Melians scarcely. The ostensible reason for holding talks between Athenian representatives and the Melian council rather than having the Athenians address the popular assembly of Melian citizens, is said by the Athenian speaker to be fear that the assembly at large might too easily be deceived by the specious rhetorical tricks that characterise long speeches (5.85). The committee method avoids this sophistic trap, and the Athenian representative

suggests that the Melians may protect themselves in addition by subjecting the Athenian arguments to a point-by-point scrutiny. From this suggestion emerges a tense compressed dialogue with a more 'anti-logical' than rhetorical flavour. As an analysis of the relationship in terms of power between unprovoked aggressors and unwilling and in-offensive victims, the 'dialogue' is a masterly piece of historical writing. It runs from Thucydides 5, 84-113, and I shall quote some illustrative portions of it.

After some preliminaries in which we note the Melians express awareness that they are holding the talks under threat of superior forces and in what amounts to an actual state of war, for example:

We see that you [Athenians] have come here to pass judgement upon whatever we shall say and it is probable [*kata to eikos*] that if our claims based on justice prevail and we decide not to surrender, we shall be at war with you; and on the other hand if we lose the argument we still face the prospect of servitude. (5.84)

the Melians receive a very hard answer:

If you have come here to engage in speculative conjecture about the future or for any other purpose than our specific terms of reference, namely to consult about the survival of your state, perhaps we should conclude our discussion here and now. But if you are prepared to talk to the terms of reference, we may go on. (5.87)

The Melians say it is reasonable enough for people in a situation like theirs to cast around for various ideas; but they accept that the meeting is simply on the question of their survival (5.88). The Athenians are determined to speak in 'realistic' terms, considering neither sentiment nor justice.

For we both realise that in terms of human reasoning justice is involved only when the balance of power between two parties is equal: those who are more powerful get what they can: those who are weak give in. (5.89)

The claim of predominant power to obtain what it can is the claim of Callicles in the *Gorgias*. It is 'nature'. Callicles and Thrasymachus imply that this real power relationship is between man and man as well as between man and state. Thucydides clearly understands that when

pretences and ceremony are stripped away, this brutally competitive relationship holds good between cities; but he nowhere openly accepts it as valid within a city and between individuals (De St Croix, 1972, p. 8). His description of the terror in the Corcyrean stasis notes the breakdown of traditional relationships between people and groups as if it were something remarkable rather than simply what he would expect. Yet in both internal and external affairs of the city states, outbursts of cruelty arising from a desire to survive and win by eliminating adversaries, are manifestations of uncontrolled primitive nature which is made to seem more 'real' and genuine than law. The total breakdown of customary restraints in Corcyra was striking in its extent and rawness; but it was not unique. We have no reason to think that Thucydides accepts willingly the ethos of the weak being devoured by the strong. He sees it happening and records it, aided by the analytical instruments provided by the sophistic movement's new range of vocabulary and ideas.

The flavour of the 'Melian Dialogue' continues to be much the same as this sample. A great power under pressure is jealous of the independence of a smaller that wishes only to be left alone. The jealousy arises from imperialist fear that the example of freedom enjoyed by one small state may encourage other small states, already satellites, to try for independence. This is the ostensible reason; and in terms of imperialist, expansionist politics it has validity. But Thucydides sees as the deeper and more genuine cause of the Athenian attitude, the promptings of a natural urge for dominance: the attitude of the hawk in Hesiod's *The Works and Days* who refuses to release the nightingale:

A much stronger has you in his power
And you will go where I take you, even if you are a singer;
And I shall make you my supper if I wish or else release you
He is a fool who attempts to resist those who are more forceful;
He is deprived of victory and suffers anguish
In addition to dishonour. (207-11)

Hesiod found he could not resist the local grandees; the nightingale cannot escape the hawk. The rules were the same in the eighth century BC as in the fifth, though the arguments are differently phrased. Although the Athenians can foresee that they themselves may possibly be in the weaker place some day, they will not take into account the principle of divine justice that brings retribution upon those who are guilty of *hybris*. Sophistic argument has set this idea as an archaic irrelevancy.

The Athenians in fact are guilty of *hybris*, and *nemesis* is applied to them in their eventual defeat by Sparta. But Thucydides is not concerned to spell this out. He is telling us how men behave, not how they should behave.

You are not involved in a contest [*agon*] on equal terms about a point of honour in order to avoid dishonour. You are talking about your own survival and the wisdom of offering no resistance to a stronger power. (5.101)

The Athenians sweep aside the long tradition of honour-code that we encounter first of all in Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon in the *Iliad*. The notion of honour did not die out with the archaic world that produced the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It was maintained in the aristocratic tradition and by the popularity and influence of the *Iliad* even in the time of which we are writing. It was also a source of energy for that individualist pursuit of *arete* that encouraged people to seek the teaching of the Sophists in order to possess the quality that leads to worldly success and approbation.

Hesiod's aristocrats care little for the honour of a small farmer. Thucydides' Athenians speak of honour (as they speak of justice) as being proper to parties whose status is equal. Thersites' claims to justice are beaten down in the *Iliad*: he is a low person, of no power or honour, and should therefore submit. The Athenians are the *grandees* and aristocrats of the Aegean sea-world.

Neither the gods nor the Spartans will be of any use to Melians faced with the actuality of superior power. The Athenians are confident:

We no less than you are unlikely to be short of goodwill from the gods. Nothing we believe or practise lies beyond the scope of human observances either in respect of belief in the gods, or thought for our own advantage. We believe it to be true of gods; but we are certain it is true of men; that under the necessary impulse of nature they dominate wherever they have the power. We did not enact this law, nor when it was passed were we the first to use it. We found it already in existence and we apply it fully anticipating that it will remain effective for the future. We know that you or anybody else if you found yourself in the same position would do precisely the same as ourselves. So with regard to divine help, we have no probable apprehensions that we shall find ourselves at a disadvantage. With regard to your expectations of the Spartans [i.e. their assistance]

who you believe will come to your aid through a sense of shame, we admire your innocence but do not envy your capacity for judgement. The Spartans are extremely courageous in defence of themselves and their own institutions. We could say a great deal about their attitude to other peoples, but very briefly we can say that of all the peoples that we know, they believe that what is pleasing to them is honourable, and what serves their interests is just; attitudes which provide little to sustain your irrational supposition that they will rescue you. (5.105)

This chapter contains the intellectual core of the 'Dialogue'. In this world, the aid of the gods cannot be relied upon. Your adversary has just as much claim upon it as you. There is no hint that the transcendent unwritten laws (*agraphoi nomoi*) of universal decency on whose validity Antigone relies and which emanate from the gods, have any practical effect in a case like the present one. At any rate, we entertain belief about the gods; whereas about mankind we can be certain. The gods too may be involved in much the same kind of power game as ourselves. Note that the word used by the Athenians for 'the gods' is not the personalised plural, but the abstract *to theion* 'that which is divine', or 'the divine'. It is impersonal, conceptualised, uninterested. And as a cosmic influence it is all the more easily associated with the 'necessary impulse of nature' that urges mankind towards domination. The phrase used by Thucydides to describe this urge is *physis anankaia*, 'compelling or compulsive nature' — a phrase which matches the seemingly paradoxical 'law of nature' *nomos physeos* of *Gorgias* 483e, 3. Aggression is the activating principle not merely of human nature, but also of probably divine nature and cosmic nature.

The Spartans, although they are ethnic relatives and potential allies of the people of Melos, come under the principle of self-interest which will make them useless friends in this crisis. The Athenians have argued themselves out of the notion of wider self-interest that the Melians put to them, and which would have made it seem a long-term advantage not to use raw amoral power. The Athenians have simplified themselves into mere vehicles for the power-urge. The Spartans do not need sophistry to make them selfish and short-sighted. Their notion of advantage will be to do nothing unless they themselves face immediate threat. They automatically and unselfconsciously believe that what they want to do is what should be done; that what benefits them is just. Their unsophisticated policies are like those of the Athenians which now have been pared down by sophistic reductionism until they

represent mechanistic lever-actions of natural urge to dominate. Thucydides seems to have narrowed the gap between Athenian and Spartan attitudes consciously and deliberately.

The Melians lost the argument. It was lost even before the talking began. They were placed under siege, and after a while they surrendered. The Athenian assembly voted that the adult male citizens be put to death and the rest of the population sold.

When this act of cruel aggression took place, the Athenians had been at war for many years, and their more civilised and reasonable attitudes had been blunted by pestilence, loss and hardship. It is most likely that the terrible action would still have been carried through even had there been no Sophists and no arguments readily available in the Athenian cultural atmosphere to support such insensitive cruelty towards, not enemies in this case, but people regarded as enemies because of their convinced neutrality and the strategic convenience of their island. By casting his description of the opposed interests of the two contending parties in so distinctly a sophistic mould, Thucydides informs us of the theoretical support given by sophistry, an offshoot of the highest Hellenic culture, to deeds of unconscionable barbarism. In particular, traditional pieties and restraints are set aside with dismissive briskness: only arguments of expediency are relevant. The fact that the fate of a real people is under discussion (it is not mere talk in some rich Athenian's house) brings the 'Melian Dialogue' to an intense pitch of tragedy.

Thucydides embedded a theory of politics in the description of a war whose very magnitude made it seem to him more universal than particular. With the aid of the Sophists' intellectual inventions he formulated a logic of action in politics which as a logic purports to be timeless. He made general use of technicalities which were intended for other applications. By applying sophistic 'science' to so large a project, he found a new dimension for it and momentarily changed its character. He made sophistry into a fine instrument of political and historical analysis. In this he had no worthy successors. He needed none.

7 SOPHISTRY AND TRAGEDY

Critias combined in himself the art of the dramatist and the technique and doctrines of the Sophist. The fragments of his *Sisyphus* which we have considered in Chapter 3 demonstrate the fact. He was interested in the early development of civilisation and the invention of morality and religion as policing influences upon the irrational wilfulness and aggression of mankind in its natural condition. In his *Sisyphus* he makes full use of the opportunity provided by the licence conceded to Satyric drama and expresses his own pessimistic views.

In the case of other dramatists, it is not easy to decide whether they are speaking their own minds or making their characters speak lines that are suitable to the needs of the play's action. It is never easy to attribute sophistic views to the dramatist himself, though it is easy enough to discern stylistic influences such as that of Gorgias upon the tragedian Agathon (Plato, *Symposium* 198c).

There is, however, evidence that of the three great tragic dramatists of fifth-century Athens, Sophocles (496-406 BC) and Euripides (485-406 BC) made use of ideas and arguments that derived from the Sophists. Aeschylus (525-456 BC) does not come within the time when Sophists were prominent. This is despite the fact that in his *Prometheus Bound* the main character is insultingly and anachronistically called a *sophistes* by Hermes (*Prometheus Vincitus* 774). There is also something suspiciously like sophistry in the *Eumenides* when Athena defends her casting vote in favour of the matricide Orestes on the grounds that the father, not the mother, is the biologically genuine parent (the mother is a mere vehicle), and therefore Orestes' duty to avenge his murdered father by means of matricide was justifiable. This appearance of sophism is deceptive. The argument is traditional Greek legal hair-splitting based on a biological theory that emerged from the prejudices of a patriarchal society. Sophists emerged from the womb of Greek argumentativeness; they did not create it. In their own right poets were teachers. Aristophanes in his *Frogs* (494 BC) shows how important the educative function of tragic poetry could be. He describes the god of drama, Dionysus, going to the lower world to decide which of the two, Aeschylus or Euripides, he should bring back with him to give good advice to Athens. Plato expresses fear of poetry in the *Republic* in a way that is effectively a tribute to its persuasive

capacity. We would expect one set of teachers, the tragedians, to be responsive to the pedagogic techniques of another, the Sophists. Numerous examples of sophistic themes and arguments are to be found in the plays of Sophocles and Euripides. But from the outset we should be cautious. The dramatic poets taught in their own way and were not interested in being mouthpieces for the new learning. The sophistic material which they employ, they put to their own use as dramatists.

We can cull from the texts of the extant plays and fragments of Sophocles and Euripides appropriately sophistic examples. Euripides' fragmentary *Antiope* (fg. 189) mentions twofold arguments: *dissoi logoi*. If you are clever enough at speaking, you can, the fragment tells us, deploy these double arguments with successful effect. In the *Bacchae* of Euripides:

When a man who is a sophist [*sophos aner*]
grasps favourable premises for his arguments [*kalas – aphormas – logon*]
it's easy enough for him to be convincing. (266-7)

This is directed by the seer Tiresias against scepticism about the new 'god' who has come to disturb Thebes. There is also the line which is so pregnant with meaning that it is hard to bring forth in translation:

ouden sophizometha tois daimosin
[We do not play Sophist's tricks with the gods] (200)

that is: we do not indulge in facile rationalisations. The lines that follow (201-2) are interesting:

patrious paradochas has th' omelikes chronoi
kektemetha, oudeis, auta katabalei logos
[We possess the traditional ways of our fathers
and these are coeval with time. No argument
will knock these down]

We have a clever allusion to Protagoras' *Kataballontes Logoi*.

Is there a rationalisation of the supernatural in the *Helena* of Euripides? The messenger makes a speech about mistaken and lying prophecies and auguries from Calchas onwards: he finishes by saying: 'your best prophet is intelligence and good planning' (757). This is less like sophistry than ordinary good sense: the chorus agree with him,

and tragic choruses are not given to radical sentiments. Yet there may be some element of Sophistry here. We cannot ignore a resemblance to Antiphon's view that prophecy is the conjecture of an intelligent man (Knox, 1957, pp. 44-5). In Euripides' *Helena*, Helen is represented as never having gone to Troy — a wraith of her went there — but to Egypt. The character of Helen in his *Trojan Women* (*Troades*) maintains that her desertion of Menelaus was not her fault but the effect of a supernal and irresistible natural power, Aphrodite. This version of the Helen story and the characterisation of her in the *Troades* both recall Gorgias' essay in defence of Helen, in which persuasion was too strong for her to resist, and her responsibility is therefore diluted.

In Euripides' *Suppliants* 913 we find that virtue (*euandria* is the word used) is teachable, a view with which Protagoras would be in complete agreement. In Sophocles' *Philoctetes* inborn quality, the *physis* of Neoptolemus, Achilles' son, and of Philoctetes himself are set against the acquired sophistic skills of Odysseus, who is also regarded as a probable bastard son of Sisyphus, and not the son of Laertes. *Physis* is used to describe Neoptolemus' noble nature; the goodness that comes from that is not to be acquired by anything other than having the right parents, and we seem to have gone back to the aristocratic world of Pindar's odes to noble athletes. But in the *Philoctetes* we have a distinctly heroic and epic play; the fate of Philoctetes is in a sense the fate of Troy. The city cannot be taken without Philoctetes' miraculous bow. Socrates, too, regarded *arete* as something in a person's being, and not acquired. This was not the archaic aristocratic viewpoint, depending upon distinguished ancestry. *Arete* was fulfilment of the individual's nature, a goal which he must strive to reach, but never would attain. Certainly it was not simply a matter of imbibing techniques or information.

There are some references in the dramatists to the idea that slavery is something that is not in nature, but consists merely in the name and status of slave. The name of slave will not corrupt a good man: this view finds expression in the fragments both of Euripides' *Melanippe* and *Phixus*. In his *Ion* (730 ff), Creousa says that the old *paidagogos* is more a father to her than a slave. The only well-born man is the good man, another Euripidean fragment (336N) tells us. A fragment of Sophocles (fg. 854N) implies that slavery is only a bodily status. Guthrie has assembled these and other interesting references; and has also produced quotations from various parts of Euripides' work that despise and ridicule slaves as being unworthy of trust (Guthrie, 1969,

p. 157). Slaves mourn Alcestis who has been a mother to them, but reflect that not all slaves are so fortunate (*Alcestis* 192 ff). The sentiments are framed to suit dramatic circumstances and the needs of plot and character. They are not doctrinaire insertions, though later on, in the fourth century BC, actors would interpolate into the play attractive epigrams taken from the author's other plays. The theme of the slave not being slave by nature, only name, is certainly sophistic, and finds an apparent formulation in the fragments of Alcidas' writings. However it may well be older; part of the familiar Greek antithesis between appearance and reality.

We should not forget Protagoras' remarks in Plato's *Protagoras* 316c 5 ff that many of the great sagas and culture heroes of the Greek past were *sophistai* without being aware of the fact: men such as Homer, Hesiod, Simonides, and Orpheus, Musaeus and their associates. Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* would suitably fit into this category. Oedipus is self-taught, like most of the Sophists of the fifth century BC (Knox, 1957, p. 136), and he is a master of *logoi*. The play can be dated to about 430 BC: the plague that afflicts Thebes in the play may allude to the great plague that inflicted such losses upon the Athenian population. There is no chronological problem if we wish to perceive strong influences of the sophistic movement in it. Oedipus attacks the art of prophecy and divination. He follows reason; but in the end the irrational overthrows him, just as it overthrows a less intelligent follower of reason, Pentheus, in Euripides' *Bacchae*, who also disregards the power of the supernatural. I do not think that the *Oedipus Tyrannus* is specifically anti-sophistic in its intention. We have a poet asserting the claims of a poetic vision of the world. This is a vision which includes Sophist and politician, and by its capacity to include it brings more partial visions of the world into perspective and exhibits their limitations. In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* a man's fate is expounded in terms of a pattern of determinant causes and influences that are not amenable to processing by logic or reason. Reason fails because it does not take account of the irrational. Which is, more or less, only another way of stating the position of the tragic hero, who fails and is destroyed because his human talents and energies, impressive though they may be, are no match for the gods.

Oedipus solves the great riddle put to him by the embodiment of a transcendent irrational force, the Sphinx. The answer to her question is 'man'. Man's cleverness defeats her and her like for a time. Oedipus' answer to her riddle: 'What goes on four feet in the morning, two at midday, three in the evening?' would suit Protagoras well. Man is the

centre, the measure, the answer to the obscurity represented by the divine, the irrational. All the time the irrational is playing with him, like an animal with its prey. And this was the fate of Pentheus also, who only saw a man, Dionysus, where there was really a god.

Sophocles is, I believe, more concerned with the situation of man in the world than he is with the possible bad effects upon Athenian man of the activities of the Sophists. He cannot be said to approve of these activities or effects; but it is reasonable to say that his mind was not greatly occupied by them. He makes use of the Sophists' ideas in an artistically assimilated way. Odysseus in Sophocles' late play *Philoctetes* (produced 409 BC) talks in a similar style to that of the Athenian hard-hearted delegates at Melos in 416 BC. Philoctetes protests against Odysseus' deception by which he has been deprived of his bow, the sole instrument of his survival on Lemnos where he had been abandoned by the Greek fleet on its way to Troy two years earlier because he had a boil that stank intolerably. Now he is needed with his bow. Only that bow will kill Paris and enable Troy to be captured. Philoctetes calls upon the gods to avenge him in his pitiful condition. He curses Odysseus, who says, almost as if he were at Melos:

If time allowed I could give extensive answers to the statements this man makes. As it is, I have only one point that I wish to emphasise. I am acting in accordance with the requirements of the present situation. When questions relating to what is just and good are relevant, you will find that I adhere loyally to these principles. My preoccupation in every field of endeavour is to succeed except with regard to you. In your case I am prepared to make an exception. (*Philoctetes* 1047-53)

The exception he proposes is in fact no favour, but the abandonment of Philoctetes to his fate, weaponless, on the desert island instead of bringing him to Troy by force. This excerpt from the generally unfavourable portrait of Odysseus in the *Philoctetes* indicates the poet's sharp awareness of the successful domination by argument of physis over that of nomos in contemporary political life. Justice and goodness are not permanent values with unvarying imperatives: they can be ignored when expediency needs to be followed. They are not practicable values for relations between states or individuals.

Creon in *Oedipus at Colonus* is prepared to use force in disregard of international morality; again we may recall the Athenians at Melos. Theseus accuses Creon of lawless behaviour, since without seeking

permission from the rulers of Athens he dared to seize Antigone and Ismene as an act of terror to induce Oedipus to return to Thebes. In his blindness Oedipus has to depend upon his two daughters for guidance along the roads, and for general support of his helpless condition:

You entered a city that practises justice
and determines nothing without rule of law
and then proceeded to set aside its
lawful authority and to take and remove
by force what you wanted. (913-16)

Creon uses force, acting according to *physis* rather than *nomos*. He disregards the *nomos* of the city of Athens here, just as he will disregard the unwritten laws of the gods later in the story as it is told in the *Antigone*, when he refuses burial to Polyneices. When the *Oedipus Colonus* was composed (it was produced in 410 BC), the *Antigone* (produced 441 BC) was perhaps only a memory in Athens; however, in the mind of the aged dramatist the consistency of his characterisation of Creon remained firm. In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* (430 BC), Creon is neurotic and authoritarian. His demeanour in *Oedipus Colonus* may reflect the new brutality of interstate relations that had developed during the long years of war and is seen at its worst in the Athenian seizure of Melos. Creon is in Sophocles' view of him a man devoted to power rather than *nomos*.

The *nomos/physis* antithesis is neatly enshrined in this Euripidean fragment alluded to as early as Aristotle in his *Ethics* and quoted also by several early Fathers of the Church: 'Nature wanted it, and she is not concerned with laws [*nomoi*].' Laws and words appear to be relative in meaning and binding power in certain circumstances that interest dramatists like Euripides. Consider the well-known 'relativistic' formulation from the *Hippolytus*: 'My tongue swore the oath; but my mind cannot be bound by oath.' The words themselves lose their importance in this last and crucial analysis of decision. Nature as it is represented in the mind's own will and comprehension predominates. More obviously relativistic is: 'What is shameful if it seem good to those that do it?' Both these lines are mocked as blatant immoralities by Aristophanes in the *Frogs* (405 BC) in the contest between the two great dead dramatists, Aeschylus and Euripides, as to which should be brought back to life to benefit Athens in her time of misfortune. Aristophanes quotes several such Euripidean sophistries, which seem to set a low estimate on the inherited ethic of Athens and her written *nomoi*. Aeschylus, representing old loyalties and emotions, wins by a

short margin in the comic *psychostasia* or judgement of dead souls.

Nature's powerful commands throw into fluid relativity agreed formulations about what is right or wrong. In the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, the *Adikos Logos* is an eloquent pleader for the necessary claims of nature, and Aristophanes thus makes clear his personal view that nature is *adikos*, unjust, in contrast with the rule of law, both legislated and traditional.

It would be unfair to attribute to Euripides firm personal belief that nature's ordinances had an overriding claim, and that our attempts to rationalise them into civilised modes of conduct by means of *nomoi* were less to be respected because they were often unsuccessful. Many of his plays — we think immediately of the *Medea* and *Hippolytus* — are studies in the power of irrational and wholly natural passion that overrides civilised restraint. There is no evidence that Euripides believed that this was how things should be. He describes in the light of nature's irrationality how things 'naturally' are, and unfolds the painful consequences of this situation.

We can, on the other hand, quote passages from his plays that assert the value and importance of *nomoi*. This aspect of him is not emphasised in Aristophanes' comedies because it is too respectable to be funny. For example, in the *Supplices*:

Theseus: I have wrestled in suchlike arguments with others when
 some man would say that humanity has more
 trouble than advantage in this life.
 I hold the opposite opinion to this:
 that there is more good than bad in human life;
 for if this were not so, none of us would now see the light of day.
 I praise whoever of the gods organised a decent means
 of life for us instead of confused bestiality;
 first of all by giving us intelligence and a
 tongue capable of communicating words [*logoi*]
 so that we could understand the human voice; and
 sustenance by growing crops, moist rains
 from the sky to make them grow and also
 satisfy our thirst. And in addition
 shelters against the wintry season, to avert the
 harshness of heaven; and means of crossing the
 sea so that we should exchange with
 each other the things our own lands lack. (*Supplices* 195-210)
 (Kerferd, 1981, p. 141)

In Sophocles' *Antigone*, in the magnificent choral ode on man's achievements, it is not the gods who provide these necessities of civilisation: man's native ingenuity is all that is required. Sophocles, too, lists amongst the requisites of civilisation, words and thought and the capacity to live in societies together, also the technology of making our own shelter against the elements (354-60). He has already mentioned the taming of wild animals, the institution of husbandry, the development of seaborne communication. His account of early man reminds us of that given to Protagoras in Plato's dialogue. Too much can be made of the fact that Sophocles, unlike Protagoras or Euripides in the *Supplikes*, does not nominate the gods as communicating to man these basic skills of civilised life. The end of Sophocles' ode is theistic enough in its implications of the danger that awaits the man who relies too much on his own cleverness, and transgresses the laws not only of mankind but the greater laws of the gods (the unwritten laws on the importance of which movement of the play is pivoted). The absence of theistic reference in the early part of the ode is deliberate. Sophocles is trying to tell us that too secular an attitude to our own achievements can lead to transgression of divine law, if we are not careful. The absence of references to the gods in the earlier part of the ode is therefore artistically significant.

In the *Supplikes* there is an *agon* between the Theban *keryx* (Thebes' herald and ambassador) who represents a city which is ruled autocratically. Theseus, whom Euripides and the older Sophocles in *Oedipus Colonos* depict as liberal spokesman for Athenian freedom and civilisation, accuses him of being over-subtle (*kompsoi*) and a trifler with arguments (*parergates logon*) which is really a poetic way of saying *eristikos*.

Since it is you who here set up this contest [*agon*] listen; for you are the one who has challenged me to a word fight.

Nothing is more maleficent to a state than a tyrant; in that state, to begin with there are no common laws; one man has power because he possesses the law [*nomos*] only for his own benefit, and there is no longer an equity. But when the laws are written down both the weak and the rich have equal justice, and if he has right on his side, even the little man can best the great. That is freedom. Who wishes to propose some beneficial motion? The man who seeks to do this wins distinction; the man who does not stays silent. What could be more equitable for a state than that? (*Supplikes* 427-41)

Some ideas in this passage, which is part of a longer speech along

the same lines, overlap with the praise of democracy in Pericles' funeral oration (Chapter 6 above). But notice the emphasis upon the fact that it is the written laws that are a guarantee of liberty. They are available for all to consult. Antigone refers to the unwritten laws which are even more powerful, according to the argument of Sophocles' *Antigone*; but the unwritten laws became less fashionable as the fifth century wore on and Athenian democracy was challenged from within as well as by external enemies. Andocides (*De Myst.* 85) mentions restrictions placed upon the use of this traditional law. It was feared in a time of political insecurity that the unwritten law could provide an easy regress back into an authoritarian past on the part of local oligarchic politicians. However, both Euripides and Sophocles are in favour of *nomos*, written and unwritten; for it represents social practice and observance agreed as right by most people and not imposed by the outrageous, greedy nature of one man who is beyond all restraint.

It is strange that Plato takes no account of the sentiments of this passage of the *Supplices* in the *Republic* where Euripides is made to be the prime example of poetic irresponsibility. The fact that Euripides composed the verse: 'tyrants are wise [*sophoi*] through friendship with the wise' was surely not in itself sufficient reason (as this text implies) to exclude tragic poets from the ideal state envisaged in the *Republic* (568b). It certainly made a peg upon which to hang the argument that the composers of such lines are likely to be subversive influences who are better residing elsewhere. Euripides spent his last years at the court of King Archelaus of Macedon, who was more admirable for his patronage of the arts than his personal character. This sentiment was perhaps provokingly close to Plato's own intention in visiting the tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysius II, in 467 BC. His achievement as a resident *sophos* was disappointingly ineffective to himself and his friends, and he was as much frustrated by the spoiled, facile intellectualism of the young tyrant as he had been by the crude bullying of the elder Dionysius in 488 BC on his first visit to Sicily (Rankin, 1964, a, pp. 63-4).

In Euripides' *Hecuba* we encounter a different attitude to *nomos* from the one expressed by Theseus in *Supplices* 427-41.

I am a slave then, and powerless;
but the gods are strong and the
law [*nomos*] that regulates them.
It is by *nomos* that we believe in
the gods and judge just from unjust. (*Hecuba* 798-800)

This is a reference to unwritten law; but it is an unwritten law that does not come from the gods, like the unwritten laws to which Antigone makes her appeal. It transcends the gods: we may think of that necessary rule in the universe represented by the Erinyes who, Heraclitus says, would compel the sun back into his course if he should leave it. Then we find a strange note creeping in: it is *by* nomos that we believe — the implication that we are induced by this nomos to believe in gods; otherwise we should not do so. It is not mere convention, this nomos, because of which we believe, etc.; it is an imperative from the regulating nomos itself. Nomos is the law of nature, a cosmic law, higher than the gods, and just as it controls the gods, so it compels belief in them and in moral values such as right and wrong. Yet the construction and tone of the lines suggest a sophistic scepticism to the effect that 'by nomos', that is by 'mere convention', we believe in gods (cf. Guthrie, 1969, p. 170). Nomos is a stabilising force in the universe and in this life of mankind, and Hecuba invites Agamemnon to pay it respectful attention by having pity for her.

The question of nomos/physis develops into the wider question of what the universe is like; how the gods view mankind and whether they are indeed gods in the traditional sense. Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis*. 4, p. 634) quotes these lines without attribution, but Themistius, p. 307 D, says they are of Euripides (fg. 136; Guthrie, 1969, p. 136).

Fortunate is the man who is learned in science, and has no impulse to oppress his fellow citizens or towards unjust acts; but observes the ageless universe of immortal nature, the manner, means and mode of its construction. Such men are never visited by an urge towards evil acts.

Here we see the influence of Ionian philosopher scientists and their fifth-century-BC successor, Anaxagoras, who is reputed to have been Euripides' teacher. Anaxagoras was, in the view of his friend, and in fact, a harmless enquirer persecuted by the superstitious prejudice of Athens. Note that Euripides uses *historia*, 'research', 'enquiry', which I translate 'science', though in his time it was beginning to have its other meaning, 'history'.

This is an early picture of scientific detachment, more friendly than the mocking caricatures in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. The scientific dimension is seriously embedded in poetry by Euripides. Detachment of mind from worldly concerns arising from a comprehension of the

ageless *kosmos* of immortal physis will become a main object of philosophy in the fourth century BC in the school established by Epicurus (341-270 BC).

Lucian and others quote these lines from one of Euripides' lost plays:

You see this boundless aether up above
embracing the earth with its aqueous arms?
Believe that this is Zeus; think that it is god.

Cicero quotes these lines in translation in his book on the gods (*De Natura Deorum* 2.25, 65). They remind us of the persistence and influence of Ionian ideas (we think particularly of Anaximenes in this context) in the age of Sophists. We remind ourselves also that the Ionian scientists laid the foundation upon which the sophistic movement was constructed. But as we read this fragment we must not forget that Zeus was by the tradition of an immemorial antiquity, the sky god.

I have at this point to anticipate slightly the topic of the next chapter and say that we cannot determine whether or not Euripides believed in the gods. Anaxagoras probably acquainted Euripides with the theories that proved to be objectionable to the Athenians: of which one is that the sun was not a god but a glowing rock the size of the Peloponnese. Euripides may also have been Protagoras' host and heard the first reading of his book *On the Gods* (Diogenes Laertius 9.54). But it is impossible to determine precisely what his views were about the causation and nature of the universe and the gods. As an educated man he could understand possible identities between natural forces and the gods that were currently worshipped: which is a different thing from personifying natural forces and giving them the status of gods. In the *Trojan Women* 987 Hecuba says that all foolish acts are given the name 'Aphrodite: that is the name people give their irrational desires' (Guthrie, 1969, p. 230). His Melanippe refers to 'Zeus whoever he may be; for I only know of him by what is said [by means of *logos*]'. And other utterances of this kind occur in passages of his plays which criticise the gods for unjust treatment of mankind or for personal immorality. The 'whoever he may be' theme is reminiscent of the genuine piety in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 160 where the chorus pray to 'Zeus whoever he may be'. This is part of ritual caution, for the supplicant is afraid to find himself addressing the wrong god, and adds a portmanteau relative clause to make sure that his words include the correct one of a number of possible targets. Euripides cleverly extends

this idiom of prayer to give the impression of genuine bafflement on the part of the human being in relation to the gods.

Parody of ritual caution which may not be entirely cynical occurs in *Trojan Women* 884 ff where Hecuba prays:

O bearer of the earth that dwells upon the earth,
 whoever you may be, Zeus, baffling to comprehend.
 whether you are natural
 necessity [*ananke physeos*] or human
 intelligence [*nous broton*], I pray to you:
 going along your mysterious way you
 bring all mortal things to justice.

We can see traces of Anaxagoras here in the suggestion that Zeus may be intelligence. In plays like *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchae*, Euripides shows that he is aware of powerful forces in the world, forces which transcend reason. In *Hippolytus* the power of Aphrodite, and the power that resists her respectively crush Phaedra and Hippolytus. In the last of his plays, the *Bacchae*, he shows the divine supernatural energy of the god Dionysus working its own destructive way with Thebes, irresistible and impervious to feelings of mercy. His view is not that of an ordinary Athenian believer. That would be enough to qualify him as an *atheos* in Athens, and the charge is made in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousai*. But even though some of his characters abuse the gods for immorality, as Ion rebukes Apollo (*Ion* 440) and as Bellerophon (fg. 286) denies the gods because tyranny and evil are dominant in the world, we cannot be sure that Euripides was either a believer or an unbeliever. There is no consistency in the rationalising or non-theistic views about the nature of the gods and the cosmos that occur in his various plays. It might be fair to say that his view of the gods was more influenced by Anaxagoras than by the Sophists.

We do find, however, that rational interpretations of the universe were ultimately unsatisfactory to him. Man was continually overwhelmed by suffering imposed upon him by forces beyond his capacity to control. The process described in this sentence could also be explained as the tragic interaction of gods and men: the latter not comprehending fully the motives of the former. Euripides used the vocabulary and concepts of the natural scientists and Sophists to express in a new and critical way this old interaction. Within the context of tragedy as an art form there had to be gods: secular influences like Thucydides' *tyche* were not enough. It was likely enough

that he would identify gods with natural forces. His use of the intellectual material and methods to hand in order to represent the old tragic situation in new terms was sophistic in that it involved criticism of tradition. When one of his characters says 'if gods behave badly then they are not gods' (*Bellerophon* fg. 292, 7), he is protesting about primitivistic views of deity. But then Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is in itself a long argument against the cruel primitivism of god-ordained blood-guilt. Aeschylus teaches that gods are better than this. Euripides' Heracles (*Heracles* 1341 ff) does not believe that gods can be immoral or imperfect. Plato will banish crude myths about the gods' immoralities from his ideal state.

The dramatists whom we have mentioned were interested in the work of the Sophists and its consequences in the change and development of the ways in which human actions and thoughts were understood and interpreted. They were influenced by the work of the Sophists, but there is no compelling evidence that they in any sense were Sophists themselves or the Sophists' disciples. They were interested in a different dimension of human experience from that which concerned the Sophists. They were poets, not philosophers; and while it is true that they were teachers of the people, what they expounded was man's relationship to the gods and the world, and the operation upon man and within him of certain divine and overwhelming obligations and forces that connected him with the world. This is a far cry from investigating *ta meteora* and devising arguments and literary styles so that they might take money while their pupils win civic glory and political dominance. Yet they imparted teachings and fostered attitudes that could lead to tragic consequences, as in the case of Critias and others. Tragedy is what happens to men or women who allow their sense of reality to get out of focus, and persist nevertheless in following out the dictates of their will. This could happen to a Sophists' pupil, especially if he became so liberated from the traditional system of ethics as to forget that other people still had a massive emotional investment in it. The dramatist selected what was needed for his art. Since his purpose was different from that of the Sophist, there is a sense in which his use of the Sophists' teachings was always indirect and metaphorical.

8 ATHEISM

At this point I would like to make a few comments on ancient 'atheism'. The subject came before us in the last chapter when we were considering the various attitudes to the gods and interpretations of deity that occurred in Euripides' tragedies. Some of these were identifications of the gods with forces of nature rather than denials of gods. Ordinary Athenians might well have supposed that a god addressed as 'aether' was being so outrageously misnamed that he scarcely could be recognised as the god he and his fellow citizens knew. But this is not 'atheism' in the sense of not believing in any gods at all. It is a rationalising agnosticism, an enquiring posture with regard to the nature of godhead as such. Much ancient atheism was of a different character from our modern notion of it as denying the existence of deity. Atheism in the ancient sense often was a matter of taking different views of deity from one's fellow citizens. This was Socrates' difficulty: he was charged with not believing in the gods the city worshipped and introducing new gods. It seems, from Plato's *Apologia Socratis*, that in the heat of courtroom argument Socrates' accuser, Meletus, may have been rash enough (a) to suggest that Socrates was completely atheist (*parapan atheos*) which is atheist in our sense: that is, accepting no gods at all, and (b) suggesting that Socrates' new gods were of much the same kind as Anaxagoras' explanation of the sun god as a large, hot stone. Socrates disposes of both of these thrusts easily; but he does not get rid of the suspicion of being *atheos*: Aristophanes' *Clouds* shows him as a worshipper of heavenly phenomena. This scientific religion taken from Diogenes of Apollonia incised a deep impression on the Athenian public mind, and Socrates' jeer that you can find all the stuff about the glowing stones in Anaxagoras' book which you can buy for a drachma did not erase it (*Apol.* 26b-e).

City states depended upon the good will of the gods, and if these gods were ignored, misdefined or reinterpreted, the safety of the city was placed in danger. If a citizen or resident entertained doubts about the nature of existence of the gods and kept his opinions quiet, he would encounter no awkwardness. If he openly denied the gods or suggested they were other in their nature than they were generally supposed to be, he became liable to prosecution for *asebeia* or impiety, and the penalty could be very heavy. Even the death sentence could

be imposed if he were found guilty.

Consequently overt expression of doubt or published criticism of the gods or doubt of their existence was dangerous. It caused dismay amongst the citizens and created a security problem. People thought that the mutilation of the *Hermes* statues in 415 BC before the Athenian expedition sailed to Sicily was the work of subversives who wished to overthrow the state as well as by 'atheists'. The mutilation of the *Hermes*, protectors of the home in the form of ithyphallic statues placed outside the front doors of houses, was a performative denial of the gods' existence and influence. It was also a ritual offence which could provoke divine anger with disastrous effects for the city's well-being. The law of *asebeia* which dealt with these offences was primarily concerned with the city's well-being. The idea of heresy in the Christian sense as a sinful deviation from accepted doctrines was not at the heart of *asebeia*. The ancient world knew no universal religion and had no organised church with systematised dogma. Nor was there an established priesthood. Religion was an observed group of individual cults, and generally was in no respect oppressive of individual liberty. Certain imported cults could involve ecstatic states of mind in which worshippers were possessed by the spirit of the deity and indulged in wild, irrational behaviour; but the importation of all foreign gods usually was strictly controlled. The city's legislature decided upon such innovations and the decision was not under the control of a clerical hierarchy. The conflict between a foreign religion and a state whose authorities wished to resist its introduction is illustrated poignantly in Euripides' *Bacchae*.

Euripides shows in the *Bacchae* how Dionysus the intrusive deity with his magical and supernatural force beats down resisting civic authority. Whether or not Euripides was a theist in the sense in which his fellow citizens could comprehend it, he seemed convinced that there was a power transcendent, immanent and irrational in the universe. Yet we have one of his characters saying that there are no gods because there is no justice in the world and evil prevails. This is the view expressed in a fragment of *Bellerophon* (Kerferd, 1981, p. 170; fg. 286). Its presupposition is that gods are guardians and dispensers of justice (Antigone believed this too), and if there is no justice to be seen in the world, then there can be no gods. This is very far away in attitude from the *Bacchae* which shows a god behaving in a way most alien to human notions of justice and prevailing over them. The *Bellerophon* fragment matches another fragment from the same play (fg. 292) which says that if the gods behave immorally, they are not gods. One

strand of criticism of traditional views of the gods began with impatience at stories of their immorality. How could practitioners of adultery, conspiracy, theft and murder be guardians of a morality that condemns such activities? We may note that the Bellerophon fragment's assumption that gods should be moral was held also by Plato, who purged from his envisaged ideal state the old *mythoi* of divine amoral behaviour. Before him, Pindar had bowdlerised some inherited myths and relieved them of their more shocking elements.

Euripides expressed no basic theology in his plays. He was nevertheless charged with asebeia by Cleon. Satyros (third century BC) tells us this in his biography of Euripides which has partly survived in papyrus. Aeschylus in his time also had been accused on a charge of asebeia for revealing in his poetry the second part of the Eleusinian Mysteries, a ceremony in which he had never been initiated and whose secrets, he argued, he was therefore not in a position to disclose.

A.B. Drachmann's book *Atheism in Pagan Antiquity* (1922) is still the only monograph in English on ancient atheism. Before the evidence of the Greek doxographi who had completed lists of *doxai* or opinions of eminent ancient philosophers under various subject headings was available in an edited form (Hermann Diels, *Doxographi Graeci*, Berlin, 1929), Drachmann (1922, p. 18) assembled his own brief doxography of distinguished ancient atheists and others who were charged with religious divergence from the accepted practices of their city state.

Those described unequivocally as *atheos* in literary texts were Diogenes of Apollonia, Hippias of Rhegium, Protagoras, Prodicus, Critias, Diagoras of Melos. Theodorus, Bion, Epicurus and Euhemerus.

Philosophers who were thought by their fellow citizens to diverge from the accepted view of the gods are named also — Xenophanes, Anaxagoras, Antisthenes, Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus and Stilpo.

We can also identify philosophers, some actually '*atheoi*', some merely reputed to have unconventional opinions about the nature of the gods, who were charged with asebeia at some time during their careers: Anaxagoras, Protagoras, Diagoras, Socrates, Aristotle, Stilpo, Theodorus, Bion.

Let us consider these various kinds of atheists and sceptics individually and briefly; of the first list, those described as atheists in ancient literary references.

Diogenes of Apollonia

Diogenes of Apollonia was said to regard the air as god. He was in his maturity probably about 440 BC and followed the Ionian tradition of physical philosophy. The doxographer says quite simply that he regarded air as a god just as Anaximenes of Miletus did (who lived in the middle of the sixth century BC). Aristophanes takes Diogenes' ideas and puts them in the mouth of Socrates in the *Clouds* (produced 423 BC) considerably parodied, no doubt, but with serious consequences for Socrates many years later.

Hippo of Rhegium

Hippo of Rhegium was active in the middle of the fifth century BC, regarded the 'moist' (*to hygron*) as the first principle, and is therefore doxographically associated with Thales of Miletus, who asserted that water is the fundamental principle (*arkhe*) of the universe. Apparently he accepted only the evidence of the senses as being valid, and he seems to have excluded the gods from his world view; probably explicitly, for when he is mentioned by later writers he often has the surname *atheos*.

Protagoras

Protagoras we have already considered (Chapter 2). He was *atheos* according to the standards of ancient opinion. The doxographer makes him an *atheos* in the sense that he denied the existence of gods. We do not have sufficient remains of his book on the gods to be sure of this. Its measured introductory sentence suggests scepticism rather than outright denial of their existence.

Prodicus

Prodicus' theory of the origin of the gods, that they were associated with the discovery of important means of sustaining life (Chapter 2), would classify him as *atheos*, but this is not an explicit denial of their existence.

Critias

Critias regarded the gods as a social function invented to police the incorrigible instincts of human nature (*Sisyphus* cf. Chapter 3).

Diagoras of Melos

Diagoras of Melos, one of the most notorious Greek atheoi, seems to have been in his active maturity of life about the middle of the fifth century BC. He seems to have been especially active, however, in the last part of the fifth century. He fled from Athens in 414 BC. An inscription is referred to in Aristophanes' *Birds* (1071 ff) (produced 414 BC) which offers a reward of one talent for his death and two for his capture alive. The inscription is mentioned in the comments of the scholiast on Aristophanes. The reference is apparently genuine. The scholiast's work is based upon an ancient collection and edition of the resolutions passed by the Athenian *ecclesia*. Diagoras was accused of having profaned the Eleusinian Mysteries by satirical mockery. No doubt Diagoras became aware that charges of *asebeia* were being prepared against him, and decided to preempt them by his voluntary departure. An atmosphere of superstitious anxiety created by the desecration of the *Hermai* before the Athenian fleet sailed for Sicily made him more liable to prosecution than he would have been in earlier years. We do not know whether he was constantly resident in Athens for a period of years. The scholiast says he lived there after the destruction of Melos (416-5 BC). Certainly he was known in Athens as an atheos in 423 BC when Aristophanes' *Clouds* was produced. But his residence may have been intermittent and this might account in part for his not having been indicted earlier. The *Clouds* has an indirect reference to him in line 830 where Socrates is called 'Socrates the Melian' (*Sokrates ho Melios*) as an imputation of atheism.

Diagoras hardly merits inclusion in a list of notable philosophers on the basis of such scanty evidence about his views as have been preserved. The tradition may well be true that at the beginning of his career as a lyric poet one of his odes was stolen, and he was unable to get restitution in court because the thief perjured himself so capably. As a result of this traumatically unjust treatment, it is said, Diagoras came to reject the gods who had failed in their guardianship of justice and right in his case. If this is true, Diagoras should be numbered amongst those who criticise traditional stories about licentious and

immoral gods. Like Euripides in his *Bellerophon* fragment 286 N, he says there are no gods because there is no observable justice (Barnes, 1980, 2, pp. 152-3). Diagoras is said to have written *Phrygioi Logoi* and *Apopurgizontes Logoi* in support of his views. 'Phrygian Arguments' is simple enough as a title, even if its significance is obscure. The title *Apopurgizontes Logoi* was taken to mean 'dismantling arguments', that is, they were a work of demolition against the gods. *Apopurgizo* was thought to mean to remove fortifications or towers (*purgoi*). But *apopurgizo* has no such meaning in the Greek of the time in which the book is supposed to have been written; the opposite meaning 'fortifying arguments' would be more appropriate. One explanation takes *Apopurgizontes Logoi* as a later explanatory title of *Phrygioi Logoi* dating from a time when *apopurgizo* could mean 'dismantle' (Jacoby, 1959, pp. 27 ff). In the second century AD the Christian writer Athenagoras mentions in his defence of Christians against the charge, that amongst other crimes, they were *atheoi*, the view of Diagoras that there were no gods. He was an *atheos* in that strong sense (*Presb. Christ.* 4). We note that according to one ancient meaning of *atheos*, Christians could be called *atheoi* because, like Socrates, they could be argued not to regard the gods the city worships and to have introduced new gods.

Theodorus

We shall speak of Theodorus again in Chapter 11. He was active in the last quarter of the fourth century BC. Cicero undoubtedly classes him as an atheist in the strong sense of one who believed there were no gods. He was banished from Athens mainly for his pertinacious and impudent questioning of the hierophant Eurycleides about the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Bion

Bion (325-255 BC), the cynic philosopher, was reputed not to believe in the gods; but his atheism may have been suspect with regard to consistency, as Diogenes Laertius, 452 ff, maintains, and he may have been prepared to conform when his interests suggested it.

Epicurus

Epicurus (341-270 BC), who is supposed to have been influenced by Theodorus, does not strictly come within the scope of this book. His great philosophical school could be called 'atheistic' in the ancient sense that it maintained the view that the gods who existed nevertheless were indifferent to the affairs and fate of mankind. Most Epicureans were not sufficiently impassioned on the subject to become thorough atheists.

Euhemerus

Euhemerus (311-298 BC) will also be discussed in Chapter 11. His atheism consisted in the suggestion that the gods were mythologised versions of great benefactors, inventors and rulers of the prehistoric past.

These, then, are philosophers specifically described in ancient writings as atheists.

The second group are dissenters from generally held views about the gods rather than atheists in the strong sense. They can, as we have seen, easily come within the broad connotation of the Greek term *atheos* for this very reason.

Xenophanes

Xenophanes (520-450 BC) rejected anthropomorphism, arguing that since the dark-skinned peoples envisaged dark-skinned gods and the Thracians worshipped red-headed gods like themselves, cattle would worship gods that looked like cattle. This relativistic criticism led him to a constructive monotheism: there was one god, but his attributes were not to be known.

Anaxagoras

Anaxagoras (c. 500-428 BC) was also a species of monotheist, since he considered that the world was regulated by reasoning intelligence (*nous*) of universal power.

Antisthenes

Antisthenes (c. 445-360 BC) said that there were many gods according to popular belief; but in nature, only one.

Plato

Plato's (429-347 BC) view of god and the gods is complex: he never denies the 'popular gods' and is strongly opposed to those who do so. But his works speak often of god in the singular and we can perhaps infer an adumbrated monotheism. The doxographers attribute to him the doctrine that Form and Matter are god, a simplistic representation of his viewpoint and one that may be influenced by later developments of Platonism. Elsewhere they report him as saying that god (singular) is bodiless and invisible and only capable of being apprehended by the wise. This is another simplification, but not so very wide of the mark. Plato would in no circumstances – we can safely deduce this from his own writings – have agreed that he could be regarded as an atheos.

Aristotle

Aristotle's (384-322 BC) notion of god was comparably complex. He did accept that gods existed, but he also speaks of an ultimate substance, an 'unmoved mover', which is the source of all movement and purpose in the universe and seems to resemble a monotheistic conception of god.

Theophrastus

Theophrastus (370-288 BC), Aristotle's pupil, seems to have attributed divinity to mind, to the celestial bodies, to heaven. Like Aristotle he was not explicit in the description of god. In Aristotle's writings the world of nature and nature's purposes and effects sometimes seem close to identification with god.

Stilpo

Stilpo (380-300 BC) (see Chapter 11) asserted that the great cult statue of Athena was the child of Pheidias the sculptor, not of Zeus:

which would be sufficient to attract a charge of asebeia. The same anecdote is told of Theodorus.

Of the third group, those recognised by the literary tradition as atheists or otherwise, who were in fact accused of asebeia, Anaxagoras was accused because his physical theory seemed to exclude the gods; but political malice against his friend Pericles probably was an important motive for bringing the charge. He was imprisoned and then deported. Protagoras was accused because of his book on the gods; Diagoras may have been implicated in anti-religious cliques of his time (of the kind associated with Alcibiades, who is said to have mocked the Eleusinian Mysteries). Socrates was accused of rejecting the gods of the city and introducing new gods: he was a victim of political prejudice, also, because some of his friends had been members of the defeated oligarchic junta, and Aristophanes' satirical misrepresentation of him had done him no public good. Aristotle was faced with the prospect of a charge of impiety which really was motivated by Athenian hostility to his Macedonian connections. When his great patron Alexander died, his enemies felt free to move against him and he left Athens 'in case', as he said, 'the Athenians are tempted to sin twice against philosophy'. He was alluding to the condemnation of Socrates on a religious charge but from political motives. Theodorus was imprudent enough to confront the hierophant. We do not know that Theodorus was ever brought to court on the charge made against him. If the accusation was made during the life and influence of Demetrius of Phalerum, it is likely to have been circumvented. In any case Theodorus had to leave Athens. Stilpo (and Theodorus) may have made insulting remarks about Athena's statue. Bion may have avoided the consequences of a suit for asebeia by adjusting his atheist principles in a prudently conformist manner.

Plato was as well acquainted as any other man with the varieties of atheism current in the fifth century BC and the early part of the fourth century through which he would have lived. He recognised that there were different kinds of asebeia and different motivations. In his latest work, the *Laws*, he is inclined to prescribe therapeutic treatment of these dissident and subversive states of mind as well as punishment in the case of really hardened offenders. If therapy fails, punishment may follow; and the punishment can even be death. I shall not relate the details of his proposed legislation in this area. A reading of *Laws* 10, 909-10, will quickly reveal its traditionalist and superstitiously retributive character intermittently marked by a specious welfare therapeutic. Yet we should not be completely unsympathetic

with Plato in his concern about such matters towards the end of a long life in which he had seen the secure world of the Greek city state crumble from the pressures of external war and internal demoralisation. His attempt to reconstruct the city state on a practicable as distinct from the *Republic's* ideal model in the *Laws* is directed to the recreation of a more archaic social system than the one in which he was brought up in the last quarter of the fifth century BC. Being more archaic, his imagined city had a longer way to travel before it encountered the subversive intellectual movements and the disruptive political developments which, as much as any activity of her foreign enemies, had brought democratic Athens to defeat and humiliation. Like the hopeful legislators of the constitutional modifications of 411 BC by which democracy was limited in Athens, Plato looked back to an ancestral and imaginary age of innocence and good morality. In his draft of a constitution for the Cretan city of the *Laws*, he attempted to reconstitute an original innocent severity underpinned by rational argument, so that what he now proposed would be enabled to remain in a state of stable equilibrium throughout succeeding generations. He attempted to save the city state for posterity.

For such an intention to be realised, it is important that people have confidence in the city's gods. Plato considers that belief in the gods and observance of their cults, is a source of security. Religion is a social anchor, piety a defence. People must believe the gods are on their side if they are going to have the motivation to fight in their own defence. And defence, internal and against other cities, is one of the main dimensions of the city state's being.

Take the case of a downright atheist: his character may be by nature just; he hates evil-doers, loathes injustice and is not attracted to engage in its practices. Such a man may avoid unjust people and seek the friendship of those who are just. Then there are people who because they believe that the universe is empty of gods become uncontrollably involved in every kind of sensual indulgence. Often, indeed, they have powerful memories and keen intellects.

Both these types suffer from the same disease of disbelief in the gods. The former is less injurious to his fellow citizens; the latter can do a great deal of damage. The former will speak with outrageous ridicule about the gods, religious ceremonies, the sanctity of oaths. By making fun of other people, he will easily make converts, if he is not charged. The latter will hold these same opinions, but has what is called a 'charismatic personality' which is really full of

snare and cunning, the sort of material from which seers develop and people involved in every kind of superstitious trickery. Some of these people become dictators [*tyrannoi*], demagogues [*demegoroi*] and generals [for *stragegoi*, however, we might be better to translate 'cabinet minister' or 'secretary of state'] and those who found their own fraudulent religious sects; this sort of person also invents the techniques of the so-called Sophists. So there are many species of atheist. From the point of view of legislation two in particular require our attention: the kind who deceives deserves two death sentences instead of one; the other kind requires psychological rehabilitation and imprisonment. Similarly there are two species of those who think the gods care little about us; and two who think that the gods can be bought with offerings. (Plato, *Laws* 908b-e)

This is a parade of the different sets of malignant person who in Plato's opinion have brought about the ruin of Athens as a society: tyrannoi; demagogues; 'generals'; those who play on popular superstition; and, of course, the Sophists are prominent villains in the disaster.

Plato is in many ways correct on this point and thus deserves the last word, not because his proposed solutions of the problem are anything but regressive and unrealistic, but because he sees that the city state is both a political and a religious organisation. It is political in every sense in which we understand the term. It is religious in a very different sense from that in which we generally use the word. Spirituality, the quest for moral purity and a profound sense of individual relationship with a god or gods, do not apply to the religion of the ancient city state, which is a religious organisation in the cultic rather than spiritual sense. Not only the state itself, but its constituent clans, families and local groups are linked together in a mesh of cult practices and ceremonies addressed to a variety of deities and heroes or demi-gods. The religious practices of the city state constitute a magical cement that holds its social structure together. Sophistic criticism of the way society works and of its assumptions about the practice of life — not merely about the gods — weakened the adhesive power of civic-religious bonds. Direct criticism of the gods and the mythoi concerning them, their supposed attitudes and their way of life, carried the debilitation to a dangerous further stage.

As belief in the gods became diluted, people became less involved in the complex of supernaturally authenticated social and familial loyalties. They became more individualistic and less concerned about society in the form of the city state.

In the so-called funeral oration Pericles tried to persuade the Athenians to love their city as if she was their mistress. He was trying, as we see in Thucydides' presentation of the speech, to substitute a secular emotion for a traditional blend of civic loyalty and religious scruple which in his time already seemed to be undermined. Plutarch tells us (*Life of Pericles* 8.9) that we can only make conjectures about the gods. By the time when he came to write the *Laws*, Plato had decided that the best security for the city was convinced belief.

9 SOCRATES

Was this one of the most unusual men who ever lived, or an eccentric Sophist who got himself executed in dubious political circumstances? The 'Socratic Problem' is one of the great debates in ancient philosophy. It resides in the fact that apart from Plato and Xenophon, we have very little material about his life and work that comes from his own time. More is available from authors of later centuries, but this tends to be influenced by myth that grew up about his life and character soon after his death. Our earliest source is the comic poet Aristophanes, on whom we cannot rely for much more than the fact that Socrates was famous enough in the Athens of his lifetime to be effectively used as an object of ridicule in the Athenian 'Old Comedy'. We know that Aristophanes distrusted what he saw as the socially and morally subversive consequences of new intellectual movements. We cannot tell how seriously his objections were focused upon Socrates' individual activities, or whether he merely regarded him as an oddity convenient for ridicule.

Another obstacle to our understanding of the problem is Plato's creative genius. He had the talents of a great novelist in addition to the analytic inventiveness of a major philosopher. Could it be the case that Plato's dialogues, in most of which Socrates plays an important part, generated the myth of Socrates' greatness? Yet others wrote Socratic dialogues, and Xenophon's Socratic writings — Aristotle seems to identify *Sokratikoi Logoi* as a distinct literary form — also emphasise Socrates' importance to his contemporaries. It can hardly all be Plato's responsibility. Also, we have Socratically derived groups and successions of thinkers as evidence for the significance of his teaching and example. We shall deal with these in Chapter 11. For the moment we cannot begin better than by quoting the 'obituary' remarks of Plato and Xenophon on a man who beyond any doubt exercised powerful influence on them both.

This then was the end, Echecrates, of our companion, a man, we would say, who was the best of the men of his time that we knew, and also the wisest and most just. (Plato, *Phaedo* 128a)

Plato writes this at the end of the *Phaedo* in which he describes

Socrates' conversations with his friends on the last day of his life. The inevitable Greek caution, in 'we would say' and 'of his time that we knew' is a simple product of the intellectuality of Hellenic culture and not an attempt to diminish praise. His avoidance of exaggeration is meant to intensify what is said by conferring credibility upon it. It is an idiom that can be found in tragedy and elsewhere in Greek literature. Plato never over-praises, nor does he go in for pointed abuse of persons.

Xenophon was less complex in mind and temperament than Plato. Too often he is unfairly considered to be simplistic in his accounts of Socrates. But he agrees completely with Plato's estimate

When I think about this man's wisdom and nobility of character, I cannot help writing about him; nor in writing about him can I do anything but praise him. If any of those who are enthusiastic about goodness has met anybody more helpful than Socrates, I think he must be the most fortunate man possible. (Xenophon, *Apologia Socratis* 34)

Before we consider why Socrates should have had such a remarkable influence (for he clearly was extraordinary in the personal impact he made on these two talented contemporaries) we shall look briefly at the course of his life.

Socrates was born about 469 BC and executed in 399 BC. He was of middle-class Athenian origins, and seems to have inherited from his father, Sophroniscus, a sculpture workshop. Socrates' appearance was odd and memorable. He had a satyr-like face, was short and stout, and walked with a rolling gait not unlike that of a pelican. He represented a rare facial type in Greece, but one whose occurrence is noted in Plato's *Theaetetus* (145a) where Theaetetus is said to have similar features.

We do not know when he first began to be interested in philosophical questions. Earlier in his life, as he is made to say in the *Phaedo* (96a-97c), he studied natural science and hoped to understand the underlying causes of the world. Aristophanes therefore does not merely foist a liking for scientific theorising on Socrates in the *Clouds* simply for comic effect. His satire has biographical validity on this point. In the same play, we should note, Socrates presides over a *phrontisterion*, or 'think-workshop', in which not only is natural science studied; but also skill in argumentation, especially the eristic, which is based on absurd premises and leads to horrifying conclusions. Socrates' interest

in argument is not comic invention. It is one of his main preoccupations, though the arguments attributed to him by his two great admirers are not wild or unscrupulous. The *Clouds* was produced in 423 or 421 BC, and we can infer that Socrates' reputation as a philosopher was well enough established by that time for him to be recognisable to an Athenian audience in this role. At some stage his friend Chaerephon asked the Delphic oracle whether anybody was wiser than Socrates (*Apol.* 21a). The oracle answered that nobody was wiser than Socrates. Xenophon's account of the reply involves the oracle in fulsome praise of Socrates, which modern taste finds less attractive than the brevity of 'no one'. Anyway, if Socrates had not seemed to Chaerephon to be wise beyond the ordinary, he would not have asked the question. Socrates is placed in conversation with Parmenides and Zeno of Elea in Plato's dialogue *Parmenides*. Plato describes him as 'very young indeed' at the time of the discussion, and if we are to regard the dialogue as describing a possible or actual event, the time at which it took place could hardly be later than about 450 BC when Socrates was not yet twenty. We have no reason to believe that Plato would be so outrageously careless as to represent Socrates in the company of these two great philosophers if it were a downright chronological impossibility. The meeting may have taken place, even if the precise nature of the conversational exchanges could hardly be known to Plato, who was born in 428 BC. Plato at the least is implying that Socrates' interest in philosophy goes back to his early years. He may be right; but we should remain cautious.

Socrates neglected his business for the pursuit of knowledge. His poverty was self-inflicted. He served as a hoplite soldier in the Peloponnesian war, and his bravery and hardihood are noted by other authors in addition to Plato. He was in the campaign before Potideia early in the great conflict between the Athenian empire and Sparta's league of allies. In 424 BC he displayed great courage in the retreat from Delium, and he participated in the fighting around Amphipolis in 422 BC. This is what would be expected from a citizen of the hoplite middle class, apart from the conspicuous courage that is attributed to him. At Delium he is said to have saved Xenophon's life.

In the *Apology* Plato makes him say that the Delphic oracle's reply to Chaerephon struck him so forcibly that he decided to find out whether it was true. Convinced that he himself knew nothing, he embarked on a career of questioning people — especially reputed experts in various fields in order to find out whether they really knew something. In every case he found they knew nothing, and was forced

to conclude that he himself must be wiser than they because he was aware of his own ignorance. Probably he did not convert many to a belief in their own ignorance; but he certainly made enemies. His associations with men like Critias and Charmides made him an object of suspicion to the restored democracy. Meletus and Anytus accused him of introducing new gods, and corrupting the young. His individualism and integrity which had led him to spare criticism neither of democracy, oligarchy nor present friends, and his conversational habits had also built up great unpopularity for him at large.

Socrates was more preoccupied with the problem of knowledge than with any other aspect of philosophy. His emphasis upon his own ignorance taken with his unwearied pursuit of knowledge seems paradoxical, but he was impelled by a moral duty to remain curious. That he 'knew nothing' is classed with the group called 'Socratic paradoxes'. Others were that 'virtue is knowledge'; 'nobody does harm willingly'; 'no harm can come to the good man'.

This last one was acidly described by Aristotle as running contrary to the observed facts of life. Socrates comforts himself with it, however, in the third speech he made in his defence after the verdict against him had been passed. Its two predecessors might be challenged on similar grounds, but not so readily. Aristotle criticised the equation of virtue and knowledge in several of his works. The most cogent points he makes are that this equation ignores the importance of the non-rational elements in the soul, and that if virtues are merely pieces of knowledge, they cease to have any purpose. He also criticises Socrates' view that virtue could not be taught, and that people are bad not because they want to be, but because they cannot help it, the same being true of the good.

The Socratic paradoxes have been widely discussed, and have been understood in many quarters to be a reflection of the striking intellectuality of Greek ways of thought which brings it about that non-rational factors are often expressed in rationalising terms. This point of view, which may well owe something to the influence of Plato and Aristotle, has been criticised by M.J. O'Brien (1967) who argues that they have many parallels in quite ordinary Greek ways of thinking of the Classical period, and that these ways have little to do with rationalism.

All the same, these 'paradoxes' are principles of some importance in Socrates' philosophy. They provide a non-rational or emotional background to his intensive search for understanding in a world overcast by ignorance. As the *Meno* and *Protagoras* indicate, he remained

doubtful whether virtue (*arete*) could be taught in the sense of a body of imparted knowledge or an intellectual technique. Yet teaching was important to him and virtue an important subject of enquiry. That nobody willingly does wrong and no harm really can come to the good indicate faith that the universe is imbued with purpose and is not a static lump. They suggest a natural purposive moral dynamism rather than an unmoving condition which logic by itself would suggest. Yet the whole process of getting knowledge and of being virtuous was so difficult and so impeded by human ignorance, that 'paradox' eventually seems an apt enough description of his views.

Socrates is sometimes regarded as having not so much a philosophy as a method, or an attitude, to certain problems. Certainly he does not have a systematic set of doctrines to present, nor is a coherent set of teachings associated with his name. He did not write down his views in a book, and this no doubt enhanced the impression that he had no philosophy in the sense of Plato, or more particularly Aristotle. He had a technique of asking questions and this technique or method, *dialektike*, could be used to establish by refutation (*elenchos*) that an apparent expert was ignorant, and could also lead to the point where Socrates and other participants in a discussion became aware of their own ignorance. After much discussion in Plato's *Laches*, Socrates and the others arrive at the view that courage, if it involves some kind of knowledge of future evil and future good — for it is certainly not a matter of mindless rashness — must be connected with knowledge of all good or evil, and the discussion if it were to continue would have to embrace all of that and the question of virtue if it was to find a definition for the particular virtue, 'courage'. They realise they have come to a blockage in the progress of their argument, an *aporia*. This is characteristic of the method that Socrates employs, and its outcome, as it is presented in this early dialogue and several others, implies that it is better to establish one's own ignorance cleverly than remain in the delusion that knowledge is truly grasped. This is not a philosophy in the sense of a set of defensible ideas about the nature of god and the universe, the problem of being, the problem of knowing, the moral duties of man, but by implication and allusion it touches upon all human experience and takes cognisance of these areas of investigation. His greatest teaching is his method of teaching, and that is by asking questions.

Questions imply answers even when the answers are admissions of ignorance. Questions imply that there is something that is worth asking about. Socrates' questions attempt by the use of examples

and instances to eliminate from consideration what the object of the search is not; or to suggest what it might be. By this means he moves towards an adumbrated definition by the procedure generally called induction, or in Greek, *epagoge*. Aristotle tells us that *epagoge* is a movement from a set of particulars to something more universal, an upwards movement, as it were, in argument (*Topics* 100a). This is distinct from the deductive reasoning called *sylogismos* in which some new proposition is extracted from statements that are already laid down, as in: all cats are mammals, *x* is a cat, therefore *x* is a mammal. Of course Socrates used this kind of argument also, but in his search for definitions his method often involved a range of specimen instances from which a definition may be hoped to arise. He uses *sylogismos* when he begins by assuming the importance or value of whatever it is that is to be sought out and defined, for example bravery, moderation, holiness or the like. From this point he will begin upon a series of questions that emerge from general opinions of the object of his search, and examines each. By this procedure he begins to induce a definition of the ethical quality of whatever it is that is being discussed. Let us look at the *Laches* again for an illustration of this (190e ff).

The discussion of courage in the *Laches* is typical of the earlier Socratic dialogues that end in no definite conclusion, but in an *aporia*, a situation in which there seems to be no way forward. Courage is at first tentatively described as keeping one's place in the battle line and not giving way. This, according to Socrates, is merely an instance of it, and not a definition of the thing itself. He proceeds to adduce instances, and these go towards the formation of the ultimate more enlightened impression we have that we do not really know what courage is. We have not defined it, but we are closer to the definition because we are more aware of what we don't know. What, he says, about the soldier who fights effectively on the run like the Scythians, or even the Spartans at the battle of Platea? But the brave man will be able to resist not only physical enemies, but the snares of pleasure also. If this is so, every instance of bravery will have something in common with every other, whether it is physical or moral courage or whatever it may be. Speed provides an understandable instance of what is meant: in every instance of speed there is the achievement of something in short space and time. There must be an equivalent common factor in bravery. The suggestion is made by *Laches*, the teacher of military arts after whom the dialogue is named, that courage is the capacity of the soul to endure. But if virtue is something admirable and bravery is a virtue, how can the stupid endurance

be real bravery? If an ignorant man who knows nothing about horses and yet tries to ride, or doesn't know how to drive and does so all the same, is braver than an informed one — and so on until we get to the point in the *Laches* that we have already encountered.

Socrates, then, was convinced that he knew nothing. He must have given evidence that he was convinced of this before Chaerephon asked his famous question of the Delphic oracle. The way in which the question was phrased suggests this. Nevertheless, there was nothing extraordinarily new about not knowing. There are indications that this kind of position was currently supported by eristic arguments like this one which occurs in Plato's *Meno*:

I know what you're trying to say, Meno,' says Socrates. 'You see, this argument that you are bringing forward is an eristic one: that it is not possible for anybody either to find out something he knows or something he doesn't know. He wouldn't find out something he knows, for he knows it already; he wouldn't find out what he doesn't know, for he wouldn't know what to look for. (80e)

His assertion that he did not know anything would for most people of his time clearly place Socrates in the company of Sophists who cultivated this kind of argumentative skill, which Plato reviews hilariously in the *Euthydemus*. Yet in Socrates' case this ignorance is the core of his philosophy. Sophists rarely committed so negative a piece of advertising as to assert that they knew nothing. They earned their living by professing to know something sufficiently useful to be paid for by those who wanted to learn it. Gorgias might construct an essay on the philosophical consequences of turning Parmenides' 'it is' on its head; but this was not a profession of ignorance as much as a knowing assertion of a universe of negativity, and this was proof of the uselessness of philosophy rather than that of the Sophists. Negativity has its paradoxical and stimulating appeal in a conventional world like that of Athens, whose conventions, although they were relatively liberal, were narrowly held in respect by most citizens. Socrates' admission that he knew nothing would have seemed surprising in a society where it was not customary to place oneself voluntarily in a foolish or disadvantageous light.

That he knew nothing was the fundamental and most important Socratic paradox. It is also the first principle of his philosophy. It would appear also to have been his final conclusion after years of asking questions. It is placed in his mouth by Plato in the *Apology* as part of

the explanation of his conduct. His processes of questioning in Plato's dialogues often do bring those who are talking to him to the point where they contradict themselves, or come to a blind end in their argument. This is the famous *elenchos* or Socratic refutation, and it can be observed many times in Plato's text, but the extent to which it was an intended refutation on the part of Socrates is open to debate. If it was, then we have to suppose that for the most part Socrates already knew the answers to the questions he puts to his interlocutors, and skilfully, not without malice, was leading them to logical disaster by means of innocent seeming questions. The attitude of Socrates in this case could quite easily be described as *eironeia* (irony) in that he is pretending not to know what he really knows all the time, and his incommoded interlocutors could be forgiven for their irritation with him. Often, however, this 'ironical' pose of Socrates, which involves elaborate and charming politeness and infinite patience with regard to those whom he is apparently ready to confute, is interpretable as an awareness in him of the immense difficulty of establishing the certain truth of any response. If he were insincere, as this kind of irony would entail, he would in the dramatic scheme of the dialogues be made to show his knowledge of the truth of the topic under discussion; but this does not happen. It is certainly not to be seen in the early Socratic dialogues of Plato, which usually end in an *aporia* or question. There is no evidence that Socrates is at any advantage to those with whom he converses. Desire for understanding is the main apparent motive of his questioning of others.

His question and answer method of philosophical enquiry may have its proximate origin in Protagoras' *Kataballontes Logoi* and *Antilogiai*, both of which were concerned with eristic. Although Protagoras is represented in Plato's dialogue about him to be more interested in making discursive speeches than in question and answer argument, he is also apparently well known for his ability in this more staccato medium. I find it hard to accept that his works on eristic did not involve question and conversational material. The *Dissoi Logoi* reflect a similar spirit: though they are not question and answer, the contradiction and contraries that they express strongly suggest the question as to which of the two statements is right. Also when Socrates puts his questions to others, they are often enough of the form: 'Is x true or not x ?' He does not confine himself to two alternative answers. Often a range of options is provided, and the purpose seems to be to select a correct answer from the choices which are offered, an obvious enough extension of the dichotomous question: 'Is x or not x true?'

Aristotle, who knew Plato well, but could not have known Socrates who was dead long since, cleverly distinguishes between the thought of Socrates and Plato. He insists that Socrates' main interest was in finding out the meanings of value words in ethics, and trying to arrive at universal definitions (Ar. *Met.* 1078b, 17-18). He also says — and this is where the distinction between Socrates and Plato is sharply drawn — that Socrates did not separate 'universals' or definitions into a different level of being from the examples and instances in which they occurred and from which he formulated them. He did not postulate 'Forms' like those of Plato. Socrates, in trying to find a definition for 'courage', did not think that there existed apart from the examples of courage he discussed, some transcendent entity, the Form of Courage, which was courage in its purest state of being and belonged in some other dimension of existence to that which we inhabit. According to Aristotle, Socrates believed that courage had 'being' or was an entity, but its being was inherent in its instances and a universal definition of it was only a definition and did not refer to a different order of existence (Ar. *Met.* 987b, 1).

Aristotle (Ar. *Met.* 1078b, 27) is firm in the view that two things in particular may be attributed to Socrates, one the attempt to frame universal definitions and inductive reasoning. He also mentions Socrates' pursuit of the essence, the real being of things, the answer to the question: 'What is it?'. This he regards as the beginning of syllogistic reasoning in its primitive form when it was still linked to finding out the essential nature of *x* rather than as later studying contradictory statements and seeing if they could be related in the same field of knowledge. This last was Aristotle's development of the earlier dialectical methods of Socrates and Plato.

Socrates' conduct of his defence in Plato's *Apology* was not likely to succeed. His attitude is that of teacher, not suppliant. He attempts rightly to separate himself from the likes of discreditable Sophists like Evenus, who is able, he says, to teach virtue for the sum of five *minae*; and his attempt to refute the bad public impression of him as a sceptic and eristic that came from Aristophanes' *Clouds* is understandable but not plausible (*Apol.* 20 ff). It would have been more help to him if he had stressed his patriotism and his service to his city as a soldier; the latter would have made him seem an improbable Sophist. Instead he explains his philosophical mission to find out whether anybody knew more than he. He mentions the experts and craftsmen he upset in the process and the enemies he acquired. He describes how young people began to imitate him, a point which is not likely to do him any

good, accused as he was of corrupting the young, and not believing in the gods the city worships. His examination of Meletus only shows that Meletus has not considered the underlying philosophical assumption of his charges against Socrates; it is irrelevant to Socrates' guilt or innocence. When he complains that the charge of not believing in the city's gods simply confuses him with Anaxagoras, he does nothing to dispel the suspicion he arouses by mentioning the *daimonion*, the divine imperative voice in his mind that warns him not to do certain things. He spoils the good impression that mention of his military service would create on the jury by suggesting that it was his *daimonion* that made him keep to his post and not give way. He has been appointed by god to be a kind of gadfly that should sting Athens out of its moral lethargy, and he will go on philosophising as before. He opposed the bill to execute the victorious generals of the sea fight at Arginusai (406 BC), who were condemned because they did not manage to collect and bury the dead with due ceremony. He opposed the tyrants, the notorious 'Thirty', when he refused to arrest Leon of Salamis. He invokes the support and testimony of his friends who are present, many of whom would be suspect sponsors in the eyes of the democratic jury. There is no way in which he will agree to flatter the jury in the customary fashion.

It is no wonder that the verdict goes against him. Even then he has a chance to mend matters by proposing a fine as alternative to the death penalty demanded by the accusation. He chose to recommend that for his services to society as a stimulator of its thinking, he should be awarded the highest civic honour of dining free in the town hall for life, or failing that, to pay the derisory fine of one *mina* which he could pay himself, or 30 minae which Plato and his other friends would help to pay. In no respect would he agree to give up his questioning and probing of the generally accepted values, nor would he consider prison or exile as an alternative. The vote went in favour of the death penalty.

Plato allows him a final speech after this vote. There is no other evidence but his *Apology* to suggest that this speech was made; and there has been much discussion whether such a speech was possible in terms of legal procedure. Whether in fact he made it, we shall not know for certain. I incline to the view that it was possible: the Athenians, being permanently curious, might have been willing to wait after the final vote to hear this odd person telling them that an adverse verdict could never strangle criticism, and that death is not a matter of terror because it either means personal extinction or enlightening conversations

with the shades of the great men of the past. Unlike the *Phaedo*, the *Apology* does not put forward a specific commitment to the immortality of the soul, although we would be justified in regarding Socrates as one who thought soul and body were separate. Even a brief survey of the defence that Socrates made in the *Apology* against the charges brought in by Meletus and Anytus indicates one thing: that Socrates did not effectively attempt to defend himself against the charges as made; that he was impelled by his individual imperative virtually to ask for condemnation, and being condemned, he opted for execution rather than escape. The *Crito* tells us that his daimonion forbade him to leave Athens for Thessaly or some other safe haven for philosophical refugees. There was also the question of his age (*Apol.* 37d), which made it scarcely worth while, and this is the fact that Xenophon mentions in his *Apology*.

The death of Socrates remains an unresolved puzzle. He seemed to choose death by refusing to come to terms with his accusers, who would very probably have been satisfied by an appropriate fine. His suggestion that he be conspicuously rewarded for his dialectical services by his fellow citizens was, if authentic, a deadly irony. We have no reason to think that the proposal was not made in basic seriousness. Although he believed he had a special status as an individual – ‘You will not easily find another like me’, he said to the jury (*Apol.* 30e) – he did not regard himself as superhuman, or as any kind of transcendent person with divine characteristics. He remained a rational enquirer, though he had overtly irrational characteristics such as the daimonion which told him not to embark on certain courses of action; for instance, it forbade him to use the good offices of his friends Crito and others to enable him to escape to Megara or Thessaly. Nor is there any indication that he thought of himself as a sacrifice whereby man and god could arrive at a better understanding. He was a predominantly rational man, and a philosopher, and as far as we can see he did not suppose that his death would do anybody any specific good. Nor, an irrational touch, would he suffer any harm from it on the grounds that no harm can come to the good man (*Apol.* 41d-e).

The daimonion literally confined him to Athens and the prison where he was to await death. By obeying it he virtually committed suicide. This is related in the *Crito*, where the scene is set in Socrates’ prison. Crito visits Socrates in prison: the time is coming close when the ceremonial ship will return from Crete, the ship that the Athenians sent every year in commemoration of the seven youths and seven maidens they sent every year in immemorial antiquity as tribute to

Minos and a sacrifice to the Minotaur. While this ship is on its journey, the impurity of an execution cannot be permitted in Athens. Socrates has had a dream in which a beautiful woman dressed in white quotes to him a line from Homer's *Iliad*, an utterance of Achilles: 'On the third day you will be home in rich-earthed Phthia'. The dream symbolism is obvious: Phthia is the name of Achilles' homeland; it is also a word meaning 'death' (*Crito* 44a-b).

Socrates knows he is destined to die, and he resists Crito's suggestion of exile. Escape, in rational terms, would be tantamount to admitting that all he had ever argued was invalid. He supports his decision to have nothing to do with schemes of escape by a rationalising hypothesis of what the laws of Athens would say to him if he were to break his lifelong contract with them. A man should not do wrong to his father, and even less to his fatherland. Disobeying the laws of his country would be to injure them and render them invalid. They have protected him and therefore he owes them an obedience which is not abated by his particular circumstances. Athens' laws allow citizens to travel overseas: he has never availed himself of this in the past, why need he do so now, making himself ridiculous by some farcical escape in disguise. If he disobeys his own city's laws, he will be the enemy of all laws everywhere.

Socrates' arguments assume an unbalanced contract between city and individual. This was not entirely out of tune with Greek sentiment, but it will be recalled that the supereminence of the city over the individual conscience was powerfully challenged forty years earlier than Socrates' death by Sophocles in the *Antigone*. Socrates himself has resisted the Athenian government when it wanted to condemn the generals of Arginusae unjustly, and he resisted the command of the 'Thirty', when they were the government of Athens. He had not acted as if the laws could never be wrong, or at least wrongly applied, as they arguably were in the case of his own condemnation. We see here a Socrates who is determined to die, and attempting rationalisation of his decision (Rankin, 1964b).

Socrates' death has some characteristics in common with suicides and attempted suicides: we might mention (a) suicides and attempts at suicide that involve a belief in a better life hereafter – Socrates seems to entertain such expectations; (b) suicides sometimes experience a narrowing of consciousness, and the daimonion whatever its provenance, would appear effectively to do that; (c) the attempted suicide often engages in phantasy, and there is evidence enough of that in what we relate of the *Crito* and elsewhere in Plato's account; (d) aggressiveness

is sometimes observed in such cases, and Socrates could be argued to have been aggressive enough in his attitude to the jury and his accusers. E. Durckheim pointed out in his classic work on the subject that suicides can often exhibit balanced and rational attitudes before the final irrevocable and irrational act.

This was brilliantly realised by Sophocles in the fifth century BC when he composed his characterisation of Ajax in the drama which is called by that name. Ajax is deceptively lucid and reasonable just before he kills himself. It is doubtful whether Socrates' death, apparently willed by himself or the mysterious forces of the spirit that moved him, could be classed with Durckheim's 'altruistic' suicides. He saw no benefit to others in his death. Only by living and continuing with his arguments could he do substantial good. However, we may say that in dying he did justify his whole life of philosophical effort which had been spent in following the hint provided by the oracle. The individual details of Socrates' motivation in allowing himself to be executed when he could easily have survived, will never be recovered. Our account is Plato's written years afterwards, and we cannot be completely sure that his picture of Socrates was entirely focused in this respect, since he had a much more developed metaphysical philosophy than his teacher, and was clearer in his views about the survival and immortality of the soul. Yet Plato was a most perceptive artist, and we cannot disregard the self-destructive slant his Socrates seems to have. Xenophon thought it mainly a matter of old age, which made movement not worth while for the septuagenarian. In this connection we should recall that the laws of some Greek cities allowed old and infirm people to kill themselves by self-starvation. Athens did not, but the idea was not unfamiliar.

Socrates nowhere praises or approves the notion of suicide. His view that man was both soul and body seems to have led him to conclude that in death the soul was somehow liberated and allowed to be pure. On the last day of his life, as it is described in Plato's *Phaedo*, he speaks of life as a practising for death, *melete thanatou*: death is, in philosophical and, we might even say, spiritual terms the culmination and purpose of life. There is nothing gloomy or death-oriented in Socrates' attitude to this conclusion. His conversation about the immanence and acceptability of death is remarkably animated. Although the general drift of his argument is that it is better to be dead than alive, he denies that it is proper to confer the benefit upon oneself by suicide (*Phaedo* 62a). His support for this view is one which is familiar enough in the Christian world: the life of a human being does

not belong to that human being but to the god. It is necessary, therefore, to wait for the god to grant the soul release from its bondage, or indeed some other agent, if that is how things turn out. Self-destruction, however, is forbidden. Unlike the Pythagorean Philolaus, who is quoted as being in favour of suicide, Socrates insists that the release must come from some agent other than the self. The views of both can be related to the Pythagorean idea that the body is a tomb (*soma sema*). In the *Phaedo* Socrates shows that he is aware of the paradoxical nature of his attitude. His view seems to be that life must be lived, and is worth living, in accordance with the imperative of seeking knowledge, since knowledge is virtue. Nevertheless, the soul is purer and happier when it is freed from the vessel in which it is compelled to live this life. Yet soul and body are not their own property, but that of the god, and it is for him to dispose of his possessions.

There can be no doubt that Socrates was remarkable both as a man and a thinker. His influence upon succeeding generations and indeed millennia can hardly be over-estimated. Our knowledge of what he actually taught is confined by lack of evidence, but we are more fortunate than otherwise that one of his pupils, Plato, was one of the greatest prose artists of all time. Socrates' moral and intellectual integrity, his great courage, his dedication to the pursuit of knowledge and truth emerge incontrovertibly in the sources that speak of him. No controversy or interpretative contention can darken these qualities which are still an encouragement to many of us when we are tempted to despair about the vices and absurdities that we all share.

10 PLATO

Plato has a low opinion of Sophists, though he concedes a little of his respect to men of attainment amongst them such as Protagoras, Gorgias and Prodicus. There are about four-score references to Sophists in Plato's dialogues, and in nearly every case their incompetence or tricky misuse of argument is mentioned. They think it is impossible to contradict. They propound verbal deceptions. They are frequently atheists. Money-making is their object. They are evasive and given to eristic arguments; and they sell these arguments as a commodity. Not-being and negation is a facile refuge for them when hard pressed in argument: they are as slippery as Proteus.

These and many other comments about the Sophists occur in Plato's dialogues, and there can be no doubt that his main intention was to place Socrates, and also himself, at as great a philosophical distance as possible from them.

I cannot do justice in this brief chapter to the power and influence of the thought of one of the most ingenious philosophers who ever lived. Plato and his eminent pupil Aristotle have been the subject of plentiful study, and I am sure they will continue to stimulate philosophical thinking and the writing of books. All I propose to do is to discuss Plato with some reference to the Sophists.

The Sophists, like Socrates, influenced Plato, but in different ways. Socrates relentlessly searched for that which is real and true, tracking with infinite patience and delicacy through an undergrowth of *logoi*, clearing a path that he was convinced would not lead him to that which he pursued (Guthrie, 1969, p. 440). Aware of human limitations and his own ignorance, he never wavered in his conviction that his career of investigative questioning was the only way in which to spend his life. Pursuit of knowledge itself was his philosophy. He maintained his belief that there was a truth somewhere. The Sophists represented instability with their shifting yardsticks of understanding adjusted to meet the needs of immediate individual advantage; or constrained by the subjectivity of individual perception, as in Protagoras' man/*metron* (measure) doctrine.

Plato was the son of aristocratic parents, and accordingly would seem to have been destined for a life in politics. The Athenian *demos* was sufficiently respectful of old families to wish to employ their

members in high office, as the career of Pericles shows. But Plato was born at an inauspicious time for this prospect to be fulfilled, though he speaks more than once in his *Seventh Letter* of his youthful ambition in this direction. He was born in 428 BC and grew up during the turbulent and ultimately disastrous times of the Peloponnesian war. When he died in 347, the world in which he had been young had changed almost beyond recognition.

He grew up in the age of the great Sophists, when everything in society and human experience was being subjected to the probing and challenging scrutiny of their dialectic. No doubt he was too young to have been influenced directly by them as teachers; but their ideas and methods pervaded the atmosphere of Athens. His father, Ariston, died when Plato was still quite young, and his mother, Perictione, following the custom of the time, was then married to her uncle Pyrilampes, an aristocrat and former friend of Pericles who had signified his patronage of the democratic interest by giving his son the name Demos. (By a strange little irony this radically named young man turned out to be a fashionable fop.) This 'Periclean' connection was not favoured by Plato, who often criticises the great statesman's memory, not less for his having been a bad educator of the Athenian people than for having reared his sons badly. Plato's older brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantos, who appear as characters in the dialogue of the *Republic*, were friendly with Socrates, and it is a reasonable conjecture that Plato had met him long before the time when at the age of twenty he is said — perhaps it is only a story (Diogenes Laertius, 3.5) — to have burned his youthful tragedies and dedicated himself to philosophy after he had heard a particularly moving discourse from him. Certainly Plato associated with Socrates for a number of years, and he became the most eloquent exponent in the art of the *Sokratikos Logos* as well as one of the world's great philosophers.

When Plato was at an age when he might have begun his career in politics there was no career available, unless he was prepared to degrade himself by joining with his kinsmen in the group of tyrannical oligarchs who ruled Athens (404-403 BC) or the restored democracy which executed Socrates in 399 BC. We shall see that he found both alternatives distasteful and his repulsion was, he tells us, mainly aroused by the way in which both sides attacked Socrates. By the time he was a young man Socrates' influence probably had made him too much of a philosopher after Socrates' own model for him to be able to face the compromises that a life in politics would have involved.

After Socrates' execution in 399 BC Plato probably went to Megara.

Other followers of Socrates also found it prudent to migrate there for a while. In the nineties of the fourth century BC he may have gone on a long journey which included Egypt, but this is far from certain. We can be more certain that in 387 BC he visited Syracuse and made the acquaintance, to their mutual dislike, of Dionysius I, the *tyrannos* of that city. When he left Syracuse he may have become a prisoner-of-war in the hands of the Spartans; but on his return to Athens he established a school in the precincts of a local demigod called Akademos. The 'Academy' was a more systematic attempt to organise higher education than had yet been undertaken. By establishing a permanent base for his philosophical teaching, he made a considerable departure from the more individualistic semi-nomadic life of the Sophists, or the informal conversations of a citizen with time on his hands like Socrates. Undoubtedly this change in teaching method was an advance in that it made for continuity; though the institutionalisation of learning — especially in philosophy — does not necessarily promote original thought after the inspiring originator has departed. Probably some of Plato's earlier dialogues antedate the foundation of the Academy; but most of his major works were written after 388 BC. The Academy remained in being until 529 AD when it was closed by order of the emperor Justinian, and it lays claim to having been the first European university.

Other philosophers followed his example, notably his pupil Aristotle who founded his Lyceum when he failed to be appointed Plato's successor. Epicurus also established his garden community in order to provide a basis for the undisturbed way of life his teaching recommended. It is safe to say, I think, that in the fourth century BC the whole mode of sophistic and philosophical activity was changing. The various provinces of intellectual work were becoming more isolated from the ordinary life of the city state. There was an increasing atmosphere of anxiety in politics and social life, and philosophers felt more secure either in schools where their contacts with non-philosopher citizens were limited, or as individuals living on the fringes of society, criticising and rejecting society's values, seeking only to survive, not hoping to make a handsome living from their teaching.

He remained distrustful of Athenian politics. His efforts to illuminate political life by means of his version of Socrates' teaching were directed to Sicily, where in Syracuse, since it was ruled by one man rather than a turbulent assembly, there seemed to be some hope of success. He failed with Dionysius I, but he made a valuable friend of Dion, an influential connection of the tyrant's family. After the older

tyrannos died, Dion invited Plato once more to Syracuse in the hope that he would be a healthy philosophical influence on the new ruler, the younger Dionysius. The visit (367 BC) was not a success: Dionysius wanted to discuss the major problems of philosophy before he had studied the groundwork, and he irritated Plato by writing a book on the philosophy of Plato, a specific theme upon which Plato himself had determined never to write. According to Plato, his philosophy did not lend itself to this kind of compendious textbook treatment, and attempts to state his philosophy in a summary would be misleading. The over-heated political environment of Syracuse was fertile of quarrels and factions. Dionysius was jealous of Dion's influence and of Plato's friendship with him. Dion was exiled and Plato removed himself back to Athens with difficulty, since the tyrant wanted to keep him longer. Once more, in 361 BC, Plato visited Syracuse in an attempt to help Dion's cause; but he had no success in this and indeed became so embroiled in local animosities that it required the influence of his friend Archytas of Taras to bring about his release.

Archytas, the ruler of Taras (later Tarentum), was a Pythagorean philosopher, and one of the very few acceptable specimens of the 'philosopher-ruler'. Plato says in the *Republic* that the reforms which are proposed in that book are not likely to be realised until philosophers become kings or kings take to philosophy (*Rep.* 473c).

Plato attempts to use philosophy in order to improve autocratic rulers were persistent, and all failures. When Dion, who could be described as a pupil of Plato and who certainly was a personal friend, expelled Dionysius and took over power, he soon became a prey to the vices and evils associated with autocratic rule. He was eventually murdered by others who also could be counted as friends of Plato. Plato's friends were as malignant in political life as were his kinsmen and Socrates' friends, Critias and Charmides.

Like the Sophists of earlier generations, Plato wanted his teaching to have practical results. Socrates' questioning philosophy had stimulated his interest in philosophical questions of the kind that are familiar enough to us today: the nature of reality, what is the good, man's place in the phenomenal world; but he had in common with the Sophists, whom he generally disliked, a very strong sense of the applicability to life of his moral and political teachings, which in his case were linked intimately with his theory of reality. Unlike the Sophists, however, he sought no profit from the application of his teachings to the work of government. Diogenes the Cynic's gibes about his enjoying the fleshpots of Syracuse are not to be taken seriously. He was prepared

to risk harsh journeys in old age in order to pursue even a remote chance of implementing his doctrines. Nor was present danger in the political maelstrom of Sicily a sufficient deterrent to keep him at home in Athens, so keen was he to improve the Greek city state and make it fit for a man like Socrates to live in.

The Sophists represented instability: but Plato wanted to understand the universe as stable and reliable. In the Sophists' world it seemed impossible to him that we could know anything, since what was to be known kept moving and changing, and we could not ever say of it, 'this is the thing I am cognising'. Nor could we say 'this thing is good' or make up any reliable *logos* about values that differ in accordance with the beholder's point of view. Yet if these Sophists had not lived carelessly in a world of argument, it is hard to envisage the development of Socrates' personal modification of their dialectic; and without Socrates, Plato could scarcely have developed a philosophy which is still strong and challenging.

Probably some of his remarks about Sophists are directed to the still surviving Sophists of his own time, followers of Antisthenes and also members of some of the other Socratic philosophic schools who maintained attitudes to reality and scepticism about society and its values that are reminiscent of the great professionals of the fifth century BC. These later people seemed to have made no advance upon earlier thought, and were therefore more justly liable to stricture from an innovator like Plato.

Socrates' questions about the nature and identity of courage, piety, *arete* and other 'value' words presupposed that they had a nature and identity that merits investigation. The way in which Socrates proceeded with questions about such words is represented in small dialogues of Plato which were written early in his philosophical career, such as *Laches*, *Lysis* and *Euthyphro*. We have seen part of Socrates' encounter with the more extreme proponents of sophistic word-play in another early dialogue, *Euthydemus*. Socrates' position is essentially hostile to those who revel sophistically in the flux of verbal and persuasive argument that has no particular concern with arriving at true knowledge. He believes that there are real standards, but he does not know what they are. Socrates was aware of his ignorance, but could not set aside his curiosity. The crucial difference between Socrates and Plato on the one side, and the Sophists on the other, was psychological and moral. The Sophists found it possible to limit their curiosity and canalise their talents to profitable ends.

Plato developed Socrates' philosophical technique to the point

where answers could be given to the questions Socrates asked. The answer was the theory of Forms, or *eide* (*eidōs* in the singular). Socrates' technique of investigation if, let us say, he were trying to find out about 'courage' as he does in Plato's *Laches*, was to review a range of specific instances of courage or, to put the matter differently, to elicit from his interlocutors a number of sentences in which courage in an understood meaning of the word occurred, and then scrutinise the answers by means of more questions. As we know, he often ended in *aporia*. However, he did stimulate people to produce these instances. The implication was that something real lay behind them; the 'real' was the common factor in all the instances of 'piety' that enabled Socrates and his friends to understand the instances.

Plato's own attempt to answer these questions gradually emerges in his dialogues *Euthyphro*, *Protagoras*, *Meno* and *Gorgias*, and finally is given its first full expression in the second part of the *Phaedo*. He argues that the instances of 'piety', for example, have in common something other than their own limited selves. A being separate from themselves, 'real' piety authenticates and causes them. Without this common factor we could not understand them as 'pious'. Since the instances of this given reality (piety) are varied amongst themselves, and yet all can have 'piety' predicated of them, 'piety' must be a general or universal thing, different from the instances in its nature and character. It must be unchanging; otherwise we could not understand the instances at all. If it were in a fluid, changing state, it could not be an effective or reliable common factor. The 'unchanging' causes the 'changeable' to be capable of being cognised.

This common element Plato called an *eidōs*, which we usually translate as Form. It also has the meaning of a 'class' or 'kind'. The emergence of the *eidōs* is implied by the format of Socrates' question 'What is *x*?' (What is piety? What is courage? etc.), and by his assumption that it was worth while trying to find the respective common elements in the ranges of examples he elicits in his conversations. According to Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1078b, 30, Plato's original contribution was the thesis that these *eidē* were separate from the worldly examples of *x*; and not merely separate in conceptual terms but ontologically separate. Socrates, he says, did not separate these *eidē* from their instances. If this is so, then it is strange that in *Euthyphro* 6d, an early 'Socratic' dialogue of Plato in which we would not expect to find 'separated' *eidē*, they seem in a low-key fashion to be 'separated' (Allen, 1970, pp. 71 ff).

Either Plato is misrepresenting Socrates consciously or unconsciously;

or else Socrates did come to regard the eide as 'separable'. If this were so, Plato could not be the inventor of the 'separation'. There are different views on the question: it has been suggested that the apparently 'separate' eidos in *Euthyphro* 6d is merely a 'class', not a transcendent entity (Raven, 1965, p. 40).

'Form of x ' is the 'real' reality, x and its fellow instances that we meet every day are not so real and can only be called ' x ' because 'Form of x ' exists as their cause, their metaphysical sponsor. The 'Form of x ' is the cause of worldly x , and worldly x 'participates' as Plato puts it, in 'Form of x '. This allows us to make predications which are valid. We can say that ' a ' is ' y ' (the 'book' is 'black') and be sure that we are talking sense: our ' a ' participates in the Form of y : ' y ' can be predicated of ' a ' because of this participation. Since the eide are separate and in terms of their being distant from the ordinary world of experience, they cannot be apprehended by the senses, but only by reasoning and *dialektike*. It is an exaggeration to say that they can properly be apprehended at all. We can shape opinions about them and frame hypotheses. That is all. The knowledge we have is imperfect; but by careful use of reasoning it can be related to reality, the true beings or eide. Our ability to understand depends upon eide. We carry in the soul (*psyche*) of each of us a memory of the world of eide directly perceived by our psyche before it joined our bodies and we were born into this impermanent and not truly real world. The soul, like the Forms is immortal. Plato, and most probably Socrates, believed in the immortality of the psyche.

This Theory of Forms encounters some difficulties. In a world of varying and relative values it is useful to be able to assert that there are true and timeless standards which guaranteed the validity of ordinary statements, and give real authority to predicates. But it is one thing to be happy with the predication x is y ; and another to face the difficulty involved by x is not y . The problem that 'not being' is impossible which came from the Eleatics assumed a more complex guise in the Theory of Forms than in the simplistic arguments of the successors of Socrates whom we shall consider in Chapter 11. You can say, according to Plato, that something 'participates' in a Form; but what is non-participation? Do we need a 'not-Form' to help us out? Aristotle feared we might, and he had other criticisms too: how should we understand the notions of change; coming into being; and passing into non-existence? If Forms are separate from ordinary things of this world, how do you express their relationship with these ordinary things? Answer: 'Participation'. But 'Participation' is a mere metaphor!

In postulating *eide* had not Plato simply summoned into the argument a whole duplicated world of Forms that in turn had to be explained (Ar. *Met.* 991a 8 ff)? Was it not difficult enough to explain the world we live in? If mundane item 'x' is related to Form *x* (i.e. participates in it), do we not need another entity Form of x^1 to legitimise this relationship and Form of x^2 to legitimise this latter one, and so on to infinity?

Negations remained a bugbear of the Theory of Forms. It proved difficult to get away from the shadow of contradiction involved in saying *x is 'not' y*. The 'is' still had ontological 'weight'. Plato never quite managed to solve the problem of the different species of 'is', nor to separate the *is* of existence from the 'is' which is a link between subject and predicate, e.g. the 'book' *is* 'black'. He came near to it, but the resistant 'beingness' of the Forms stood in his way (Runciman, 1962, p. 126).

Aristotle, on the other hand, recognised that the verb 'to be' had several meanings of which the statement of existence was only one. As an inheritor of the Ionian tradition of 'scientific' philosophy, he did not think of 'being' as a 'lump' of unchanging pure reality, but as something purposive which manifested itself in a variety of guises. 'Being' was a kind of substrate and in its original state was little but potentiality (*dynamis*) which is subject to realisation or being made 'actual' by *energeia*, a kind of primal 'form'. Beings were only actualised or 'real' when 'form' and substrate were united. We can make the acquaintance only of real particulars which are the only 'beings' that there are. Plato's Forms are classes or genera, but by comparison they seem very much like glorified particulars. Aristotle's beings (*ousiai*) are capable of change: the substrate material is always being shaped by new forms and the process of change is subject to four causes which have been called (1) Formal Cause, the 'what it is' (the being), (2) the Material Cause, the 'from what it is', (3) the Efficient Cause, the 'by which, by what means it is', (4) the Final Cause, the 'for what, for what end or purpose it is'. All are answers to questions that can be put about 'being'. Being is also qualified by categories or 'predicates' such as substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, situation, action, reception of the effects of action. I shall not go further than this general reference to the various ways in which a thing 'is' according to Aristotle. I want simply to make it clear that he regarded 'being' not as inflexible entity, but as dynamic; amenable to purposes and ends; susceptible of change and motion. Like the Ionians, he accepted change and movement in the world and his philosophy reflects this acceptance. His *logos* developed towards syllogistic (*syllogismos*), a way of taking propositions

together so that the argument moves from the general to the particular; it is largely a process of narrowing down and identification; whereas Plato always kept his thought moving towards universal eide. Negation does not present such a problem when you are isolating a particular from something more general. You can isolate the particular by stripping away from it whatever does not belong to it without doing injury to its status as a 'being'. But when the particular, as in Plato's theory, derives its very 'beingness' from its connection (or participation) with a general or universal entity with which it is somehow ontologically continuous, you are still confronted by the problem of denying its true 'being' once you try to say it *is not*. This problem remains whether you are saying of x , x *is not* or x *is not* y (' y ' being a Form in which x 'participates'). In his distinguished and logically subtle later dialogue, *Sophist*, he tried to solve the difficulty by addressing higher and more inclusive eide. In these he emphasised the function of the eidos as a 'class' or 'kind' and he called them the 'greatest kinds' (*megista gene*). They were 'being', 'same' and 'other', 'motion', 'rest'. 'Other' seemed to be able to fulfil the duties of the logical relation 'not'. If x participates in 'other' in respect of ' y ', or rather that aspect of 'other' that is 'other than y ', then x is not participant in ' y ' (Lee, 1972, pp. 267-304). There are many problems involved in the *Sophist*'s treatment of the difficulty and indeed they are not yet completely solved. Obviously it is difficult to explain how anything comes into non-relationship with an eidos than which it is 'other' (or in plain words which it is 'not'), given the nature of the eidos as a 'being', not a mere attribute. Plato was very sharply aware of this and other logical difficulties that arose from his brilliantly constructive answer to Socrates' 'What is x ?' type of question. He may have proposed solutions in his oral teaching that he did not choose to write down in dialogues which were designed to provoke thought, rather than give systematic accounts of his philosophy of logic and/or precise answers to problems.

Plato's development of Socrates' dialectic placed emphasis upon two processes, Division, *diaeresis*, and Collection. In his *Phaedrus* (256c), a dialogue which now is generally supposed to be later than the *Republic*, an ability to divide reality according to its correct sections or parts is introduced initially as the mark of the expert orator. Rhetoric was concerned with making distinctions between things for the purpose of winning the case or argument. Plato moves from this position to a dialectic which is concerned with in the separation of reality into eide which correspond with the natural demarkation of

reality so that the analytical process ends with basic eide which are 'atomic' in the etymological sense of being 'uncuttable' into smaller parts. Collection (*synagoge*) is the gathering together of eide into greater 'kinds' (gene) which narrow down in number until they are all brought under the highest eidos of all, the Form of the Good. The operation of diaeresis and synagoge are discussed in dialogues from his later period, *Sophist*, *Politicus* and *Philebus*. Aristotle criticised Plato's diaeresis in *The Parts of Animals* (*De Partibus Animalium*) on the grounds that some of Plato's 'written divisions' (lists of diaere-seis published by Plato but now lost) were wrongly made (Skemp, 1952, pp. 70-1). Plato's concentration on the eide (Forms) in his dialectical operations also provoked Aristotle's criticism, though he was probably unfair in his supposition that Plato was actually trying to 'define' Forms (in the sense of gene or 'kinds') by this dialectical method (Raven, 1965, pp. 188-92). The process of Division/Collection was especially applicable to biological studies and the classification of animals and plants. A fourth-century-BC comic dramatist, Epicrates, includes a mock seminar of Plato's Academy in one of his plays. The students are shown arguing whether a pumpkin is perhaps a genus of grass. The allusion to diaeresis and the argument over 'kinds' (gene, plural) shows how well known this application of dialectic to the isolation of species and kinds had become. This 'scientific' side of Plato's work, which interested Aristotle, provides us with a connection between the argumentation of the Sophists and Socrates and the history of scientific method, for there is no doubt that the way in which the description and organisation of kinds and species developed over the centuries owes much to Plato's attempt to discipline the use of dialectical method. Plato, through Socrates, owes an intellectual debt to the Sophists, even the unknown inspirer of the *Dissoi Logoi*. Speusippus, Plato's nephew successor as head of the Academy, was also interested in techniques of classification. But Antisthenes, following his own line of Platonic sophistry blended with Socraticism, ridiculed an allegedly Platonic definition of man as a 'featherless biped' — the outcome of a trial chain of diaere-seis no doubt — by plucking a chicken and producing it before the master and his students.

According to Plato our knowledge of reality cannot be direct in that our acquaintance with reality cannot simply be brought about by listening to Sophists' courses of lectures or any other kind of descriptive exposition. The psyche's recollection of the real world it once knew enables us to have some notion of truth and reality, and arete in the mundane instances of these which we encounter. They cannot

be imparted simply. Yet teaching and study and logoi can lead us to a better posture in relation to truth and reality. Also, Plato decided that if it was almost impossible to teach *politike arete* by means of straightforward explanation, he could nevertheless frame a shape of something in which each individual member would by the very arrangement of society be directed towards arete and would play his or her part in a structure that was oriented to truth and reality. This imagined society was the *Republic*, an ideal city state which probably he did not believe capable of realisation in this world, but which bore sufficient resemblance to actual societies of Athens and Sparta to make its realisation seem like a possible aim at some time, in some place. Plato did not attach much importance to his written works as direct communication of his philosophy. His dialogues were teaching or learning aids rather than definitive accounts of their topics. His aim in writing them was to encourage his students and other people to think about the topics that the dialogues discussed. Apart from being attracted to the dialogue as a literary form by his admiration for Socrates' talk, the dialogue proved to be a sufficiently indirect and oblique medium of ideas to suit his notion of the limited adequacy of written works as a means of communicating his thought. We should be careful not to be too literal in our interpretation of the *Republic* as representing every aspect of Plato's personal wishes for the future of human society. This applies also to his last work, the unfinished *Laws*, though its detailed and practical treatment of the body of law suitable for a socially stable and enduring new city is less fanciful than the *Republic's* prescriptions and closer to what could actually be realised.

The *Republic* is a large and complex dialogue. It begins with a discussion on justice. Thrasymachus and Socrates are the main participants at this stage. The conversation develops into a more complicated project when the sophistic arguments of Thrasymachus about justice (which we have considered in Chapter 2) come to an unproductive end. A more positive line of enquiry connects the question of justice to the nature of society. Socrates relates the structure of society to that of the individual psyche. The psyche is argued to have three important constituents, the 'intelligent', the 'spirited', the 'acquisitive', and these may be reproduced in the organisation and function of classes in a society which is designed to accord best with nature. 'Nature' in the *Republic* is close to 'reality', and is invoked in the sophistic way as something opposed to law and agreed custom. Society is to be divided into classes or groups of people which have the salient characteristics of 'intellect'; 'war-like' spirit'; 'industry and acquisition'. The first of

these characterises the rulers who practise dialectic after a long and strenuous mathematical and philosophical education, and who will use it as the instrument of wise government; the second, which overlaps somewhat with the first, is that of guardians (*phylakes*), protectors of this ideal city from subversion inside its walls and from its external enemies; the third is the class which is involved in production of the wealth needed to sustain the city's life. The three classes receive education appropriate to their function. The point is made with some emphasis that it is in accordance with justice for people to be asked to perform contributions to the life of society that are suitable to the talents nature gave them. There is also a fiction proposed to help people to accept their respective roles. This is the so called 'metal myth', which suggests that the three classes have the relative characteristics of 'gold' for rulers, 'silver' for phylakes and 'bronze' for the third class. The myth is intended to facilitate eugenic arrangements; 'like' will mate with 'like', not 'unlike', so that as generations pass, the characteristics of the three groups will become more concentrated. There is a passing acknowledgement of the possibility that 'bronze' children may be born to 'gold' parents or 'gold' to 'silver' or 'bronze', and that these will be educated in accordance with their own natural state rather than that of their parents. But the scheme of education is more clearly focused on training in accordance with the function of the parental class, and by its conditioning of infant behaviour it would tend to work against the detection of individual 'gold' children amongst 'bronze'. It might even mask the presence of 'bronze' amongst 'gold' (Rankin, 1964a, pp. 70-5). Family life for the two higher classes will be abolished, and people will live in age groups. Short and temporary marriages for the purpose of begetting young will be allowed; but people remain attached to their group rather than the family. Women are to enjoy equality with men in most spheres of life, because in the animal kingdom equality of status and function was natural between male and female. Complex eugenic mathematics will bring it about that socially useful characteristics will be increased in the population. Courageous warriors will find that they have more marriages than their less successful colleagues. Children of the 'gold' and 'silver' groups will be brought up in civic crèches, not with their parents who will live separately with their own peer groups.

These features of the *Republic* suggest Sparta. The animalist approach to eugenics is particularly reminiscent of Spartan practice. The dialectic practised by the rulers of the city is alien to Spartan custom; but animal analogy is latent in Spartan organisation of age

groups for the training of the young; such words as *agele*, which means 'gathering' but is used of animals more often than people. Spartan eugenics, which involved infanticide of children born with a defect, also are evidently influential in Plato's arrangements for the reproduction of the two upper classes, but the lower class 'bronze' people, like Spartan Helots, seem free to make their own marital arrangements. Plato seems to suggest infanticide not merely of malformed but genetically inferior children of the ruling classes (*Rep.* 459d-e-461b; Rankin, 1964a, pp. 44-6).

Although Plato does not place *physis* in opposition to *nomos* in the *Republic*, he argues that what agrees with *physis* is worthy of being introduced into the *nomoi* of the new state. And as we have mentioned, he regards *physis* as being close to reality. Yet the arrangements he proposes for marriage and eugenics come close to the raw concept of nature that is to be found in older Sophists like Antiphon. Another somewhat crude example of naturalism in the *Republic* is the analogy suggested between the warrior class of guardians (phylakes) and well-trained watchdogs (*Rep.* 335b, 375a-b, 376b, 451d, 456a; Rankin, 1964a, pp. 52-4).

The scheme of life outlined in the *Republic* bears notable resemblances to the utopist and feminist state described by Aristophanes' brilliantly comic imagination in his *Ecclesiazusae* (Women in Parliament) produced in 392 BC. This play is by every accepted reckoning several years older than the *Republic*. In common with Plato's dialogue it advocates the abolition of marriage and the abolition of money as currency. The household is abolished. All children regard all men as fathers (in Plato children of a certain birth group regard men and women of a marriage group that corresponds to their age as parents). Women are given power in the *Republic*, where, like the females of dogs and other animals, they are thought to be capable of duty equal to that of the male: women seize power in *Ecclesiazusae*, and become the dominant sex.

Verbal resemblances between the two texts suggest that Plato was acquainted with the *Ecclesiazusae*. It is reasonable to suppose that the *Republic* followed some of its utopist outline. But Diogenes Laertius 3.37 (D-K 80 5) says that Aristoxenus (musicologist and pupil of Aristotle) held the view that most of Plato's *Republic* could be found in the *Antilogika* of Protagoras. Maybe Aristoxenus is guilty of a deliberately shocking 'Shavian' paradox, or maybe he is telling some of the truth. If the latter, then we may suppose that the *Antilogika* was not a set of opposed logoi like the *Dissoi Logoi*, but a continuous text

of provocative arguments not unlike the fragment of his *Kataballontes* (Chapter 2 above). Possibly it resembled the dialectical 'monologues' of Socrates in the *Republic*. I find it difficult to believe that Aristoxenus' claim is completely without foundation.

Plato was the greatest Socratic of all, and even towards the end of his long life the memory of Socrates remained alive and cherished in his mind. Yet it has been argued that he betrayed Socrates. The betrayal consisted of his organisation of a totalitarian social scheme in the *Republic* which would exclude the open and free questioning of values that was an essential element of Socrates' philosophical practice. This criticism of Plato in relation to Socrates finds particularly forceful expression in K.R. Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies* volume 1, *The Spell of Plato* (1945, pp. 194-5). The criticism has some force in the very basic sense that scrutiny of values in the state conceived in the *Republic* and by implication the practice of dialectical argument would be the proper province of the ruling philosopher-guardian, and would not be considered desirable in members of the other classes of society. On the other hand we may observe that Socrates has many of the characteristics of the philosopher-ruler. In the portrait of Socrates we can deduce from the early dialogues and those of the middle period such as the *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, we see a man devotedly and entirely given to a deliberate pursuit of truth and justice, a severe critic of his own ignorance, a man who sees himself as closely woven into the texture of society, loyal to its laws and seeking to benefit it. It was the democracy of Athens, a society which by Popper's standards is infinitely more open and liberal than the city of the *Republic*, that condemned Socrates (Rankin, 1964a, pp. 120-1).

However, the Oligarchs, the so-called 'Thirty Tyrants' (404 to 403 BC) showed Socrates scant respect, though they did not find a reason to indict him. The following passage from Plato's *Seventh Letter* shows that the 'Thirty', which included Critias and Charmides, Socrates' friends, were not well disposed to Socrates. It also illustrates the continuity of Plato's regard for his memory even at the time when this letter was written to Dion's friends at Syracuse about the year 353 BC.

When I was young I had the same notion as many young men that I would enter politics as soon as I became independent. And certain events in the political life of our city turned to my advantage. Since the constitution we had then was in disfavour in many quarters, a revolution took place and as a result of the revolution fifty-one men were appointed as the government: eleven to regulate

the city, ten to control the Peiraeus — these two groups were charged with the management of the market place and other municipal affairs — and thirty who had authority over all of them were appointed as a government with dictatorial powers. Some of this group happened to be relatives and friends of mine, and they immediately invited me to join in what seemed like a project of great importance. My opinion of them need cause no surprise, for, after all, I was young: I believed they were leading the city away from her old unjust ways and that they would manage her affairs accordingly. And so I watched them very closely to see what they would do. As I watched them, they very quickly demonstrated that the previous constitution had been a thing of pure gold. Amongst other things they did was to order Socrates, a friend of mine and an elderly man whom I would without hesitation name as the justest man then alive, to go with some others and arrest a certain individual so that he might suffer execution. Their intention was that Socrates should become involved in their actions whether he wanted to or not. He would not obey them and incurred the direst risks rather than be a participant in their atrocious conduct. (324c-d)

This attempt of the 'Thirty', Plato continues, disgusted him. When the 'Thirty' were deposed in a savage civil war and the democracy restored, Plato remarks upon the moderation with which the new government conducted the city's affairs, until 'by some chance' (325b) some prominent politicians decided to accuse Socrates. This was a disgraceful action. Its victim was a man who least deserved such an attack. Before this event Plato seems to hint that he would have been prepared to engage in politics under the democracy. The older he grew, Plato tells us (325c), the more he became convinced how difficult it was to manage a city state in a proper fashion. The main problem was the security of good and loyal colleagues, without whom the task was impossible. He mentions also how impressed he was by the rapid corruption of all the laws. The instability of the body politic confused and dismayed him and eventually he was repelled by the whole notion of participating in political life. New and properly framed laws were a prime necessity if there was to be any hope of improvements. And eventually he mentions once more the need for philosophers becoming kings or kings taking to philosophy (326b), possibly quoting himself from the *Republic* 473c.

His reverence for Socrates is undoubted even at this stage of his life. Socrates fits the requirements of the philosophic ruler of the new

city state purged of the vices of the old. Yet a passage in the *Laws* (908e) has been interpreted as hostile to Socrates' methods of enquiry and viewpoint. The man who will not refrain from stating views about the gods that run counter to the state's conventions has to be condemned but may be corrected. If he uses *to eironikon* and is thereby a deceiver who speaks on more than one level of meaning, his insidiousness is such that he deserves to be executed twice! Although the mention of Sophists in the neighbouring text suggests that Plato has these and their antilogic principally in mind, his legislation would undoubtedly catch Socrates, who in Plato's own words is described as using *eironeia* when he seems to speak words that have more than one level of meaning (Plato, *Gorgias* 489e, *Republic* 337a, *Symposium* 216e). There is no way in which we can avoid the paradox of a Socrates who is well regarded throughout Plato's life confronting a Socrates-type who would be condemned by the 'Nocturnal Council' which regulated the thoughts and attitudes of the citizens in this city of the *Laws*. Pessimism borne of harsh experience may have led Plato to the conclusion that a comprehensively framed legal and administrative system contains within itself all the capacity for self-questioning what is needed. Perhaps he envisages Socrates' equivalent in the *Laws* as a member of the 'Nocturnal Council'. Many writers on Plato have been saddened by his evident abandonment of the Socratic principles in his old age. There is no plausible way out of the paradox.

Yet Plato was in general far from pessimistic. His plan to reconstruct Greek society on the basis of a reformed city state was out of harmony with other sophistic and philosophical movements of his time. Aristotle is not so much a reformer as a sociological analyst who distills the conclusions of wide research on the subject of city-state constitution into his *Politics*. Antisthenes, the Socratics and the early Cynics, tended towards individualism rather than faith in the city state. Plato was a passionate and positive reformer. His assumption that it was worth while to make attempts at reform either through teaching and writing, or trying to educate and influence in person the rulers of city states was essentially optimistic, in spite of the reservation that he expressed from time to time. In this he was a follower both of the great Sophists and of Socrates. From the point of view of the theory of knowledge, Plato was not able to say that arete was teachable in the ordinary sense of the word. Yet his career as a teacher, writer and would-be political adviser reveals the hope that somehow it might be possible. He tried to combine individual with society in a happy and secure union at a time when the main historical movements in society

were towards individualism and towards larger concentrations of political power that would overshadow the city state. We cannot blame any man for misreading the signs of his time. The more individualistic Socratics and Cynics were no wiser. They did not so much perceive the contemporary drift of Greek political and social development as react to it.

11 THE SOCRATICS

This chapter will give an account of some of the philosophers who are generally classed as Socratics. They are either friends of Socrates who knew him personally and were influenced by him, or successors of these friends, or successors of the successors. I am excluding Antisthenes from consideration in this chapter together with philosophers who are actually called Cynics, for I believe that the cynic philosophers, whom we call a 'school' for convenient shorthand purposes, represent a more diffuse and individualised philosophical impetus than the word 'school' suggests.

The groups of Socratics whose representatives we shall discuss in this chapter are often mentioned also as belonging to various schools, Megaric, Elean, Eretrian, Cyrenaic, called after the city associated with their founder or in which he mainly resided. You will see that there are overlaps in doctrine between groups and individuals, and that 'school' in this context also conveys an exaggerated notion of social and doctrinal coherence.

It is the perspective of history that focuses them into schools and sub-schools, but they were more individualistic than this way of talking about them implies. True, the immediate friends of Socrates clung together after his death for fear they might suffer a similar fate: also it is convenient to name the 'schools' from the towns where their best-known representative originated or resided; but eventually the men are individuals with more-or-less similarity in their teaching. Principally they had in common a reverence for that part of Socrates which did not accept common assumptions about life, practised vigorous dialectic, and was sceptical about the possibility of knowing reality or being. We shall consider some of these intellectual descendants of Socrates mostly as individuals, mentioning their connection with the so-called Socratic schools where it seems appropriate.

Plato and Aristotle should figure in any account of those who were influenced by the Socratic method of criticism and question. As we have seen, Plato is the greatest Socratic of all, and we are mainly dependent upon his writings for our knowledge of Socrates' philosophy and character. Aristotle, both as Plato's pupil and as a philosopher of very wide-ranging interests, seems less obviously to belong in the Socratic tradition. In him we see other influences at work, such as

the Hippocratic discipline of paying close attention to carefully amassed data which came from the medical tradition in his family; also the interest in nature that seems to perpetuate Ionian natural science. But his contribution to logic is immense and of lasting importance. His systematising of the *logoi* in the *Analytics*, *Topics* and *Sophistic Refutations* shows how effectively he turned dialectic into a science. In his younger years in Plato's Academy he wrote Socratic dialogues like many other 'Socratics'. Some fragments of these elegant works remain.

However, with the exception of Xenophon, the Socratics who are our immediate concern have left little of their own work behind them. We know about them from references in some later authors, in particular Diogenes Laertius. A tradition about their lives, characters and opinions began early, probably even as early as Theophrastus. This material, a considerable part of it anecdotal, became conveniently bundled for writers like Diogenes Laertius and even Cicero, to draw upon. We should be cautious in our use of this source. Some people are sceptical of its value, but I am with those who think that a valuable core of information lies beneath the anecdotal and biographical froth. Even the anecdotes themselves should not be completely despised. Their pointed epigrams, witty remarks, contrived personal confrontations were part of philosophical teaching method. With care, something may be got from them that helps us to understand these vivid characters, but I am going to quote very little anecdote. If you wish to be amused and instructed by it, I suggest you look at Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers* in the sections that deal with the various individual philosophers named here.

Our Socratics most resemble their great original, Socrates, in their rational curiosity. And what they most want to understand is 'being', how a thing can be said to be and also how we are to live in relation to what we can know of this 'being'. Like Socrates, they are fascinated by the strange conflict between 'being' as they approach it rationally by means of dialectic, and the common appearances and experiences of everyday life. This in a sense is still the armature of philosophy itself. Some of the Socratics followed the consequences of their arguments about 'being' so strictly that they rejected or neglected the data of ordinary life as irrelevant. Others, like Socrates, were aware how little could be known, but, unlike him, gave up the effort to harmonise what their reason told them about their own ignorance with the fact of human curiosity. The Cyrenaic philosophers, for instance, had no interest in the theory of knowledge. They did not think it was possible to know anything for certain either by reason or the senses, and

concentrated upon the idea of a life operated by the motives of pleasure and pain. Others, we shall see, rejected the world of the city state and lived for themselves; others were active in politics. Most were convinced of one thing, that man was a sufficiently vital animal to need a purpose, whether it be the pursuit of pleasure or a logical and austere investigation of 'being'.

In Plato's *Phaedo*, the young man from Elis in the Peloponnese after whom it is named, gives an account of Socrates' last day, his discussion of the immortality of the soul, and his heroic death. He tells his story to a man called Echecrates, and in one of the more circumstantial parts of his narrative he mentions those who, apart from himself, were present at the death scene. This had a strange atmosphere according to Plato's admittedly secondhand account. It seemed to have a touch of the supernatural and uncanny about it:

Phaedo: You know, I found it a strange experience being there: I felt no sense of the pity that you would expect me to feel, being present at the death of a man for whom I felt affection; for he seemed happy both in his demeanour and in what he said, Echecrates. He was meeting his death so fearlessly and with such courage that I was convinced he was not going to the house of Hades without divine support, and that when he got there he would be uniquely happy. So I didn't feel at all any of the pity that would be expected at an occasion of grief; nor on the other hand did I have any sense of pleasure as we would in our customary philosophical discussion. You see, our conversation was of a philosophical kind. In fact I had an entirely weird feeling, an unprecedented mixture of happiness and anguish, realising as I did that he was going to die very soon. All of us who were there had much the same experience, sometimes we laughed, occasionally were in tears — and one of us in particular, Apollodorus. I think you know him and his temperament?

Echecrates: Certainly I do.

Phaedo: He was in the worst state, but I myself was upset and so were the others.

Echecrates: Who actually was there?

Phaedo: There was this Apollodorus from the local people, and his father Critoboulus and also Hermogenes and Epi-

genes and Aeschines and Antisthenes, Ctesippus of Paeane was there too and Menexenus and some other locals. I think Plato was sick.

Echecrates: Were there any foreigners there?

Phaedo: Yes, Simmias from Thebes, and also Cebes and Phaedondas; and from Megara, Euclides and Terpsion.

Echecrates: Weren't Aristippus and Cleombrotus there?

Phaedo: No: they were said to be in Aigina. Crito, of course, was also present. (*Phaedo* 58e-59c)

This was a gathering of not merely personal friends or loyal students. Some became philosophers in their own right, and have their own particular development of Socratic teaching attributed to them by tradition. Plato and Aristippus, who are mentioned but not present, became leaders of their own philosophical group or 'school'. So also did Euclides and Antisthenes. Aeschines was famous for his *Socratikoi Logoi*, and it is a pity that, except for a few fragments, his work is lost. Phaedo, Simmias and Cebes also became philosophical teachers and writers of dialogues.

Phaedo of Elis was of aristocratic family. He was taken prisoner when his country was taken and compelled to stand in front of a hovel [to offer himself for prostitution]. When he closed the door [that is, in his free time] he associated with Socrates, who eventually persuaded Alcibiades' or Crito's friends to buy his freedom. After that he freely engaged in philosophy. Hieronymus of Rhodes in his book *On the Retention of Friends* asserts he was a slave. He actually wrote the following dialogues, *Zopyrus*, *Simon*; doubtful attributions are *Nicias*, *Medios*, which some say are by Aeschines, others say Polyainos wrote them. The *Antimachus* or 'Old Men' is also of doubtful authorship; also the so called 'cobblers' dialogues' which some ascribe to Aeschines (Diogenes Laertius 2. 105)

We may have some clues about the contents of Phaedo's dialogues, though it cannot be expected that we can reconstruct his teaching as a whole. For example:

Now don't we read how Zopyrus, the expert in physiognomy, claimed he could understand people's characters and natures from their body, eyes, face, forehead? He said Socrates was stupid and sluggish on the grounds that he did not have open collar-bones; he

said that these parts [of Socrates' body in the region of the neck] were closed up and thick. He added that Socrates was lustful of women; at which Alcibiades is said to have burst out laughing. (Cicero, *De Fato* 5.10 and *Tusculan Disputations* 418)

The passage goes on to discuss how sensual propensities are capable of being controlled by the will, by practice and philosophy, in emphasising the conflict between animal impulse and reasoned control of impulse. This theme occurs often in Plato's work. It may be genuinely 'Socratic' in origin and inspiration. We recall the fifth-century-BC conflict between nature (*physis*) and man-made law and ethic (*nomos*). Plato's *Symposium* also has Alcibiades as one of its characters. In the speech attributed to him he compares Socrates to a crude, obscene Silenus figure, outwardly rough and sexually aggressive; but there is hidden inside his coarse exterior a statue of one of the gods. Such Sileni could be bought in fifth-century-BC Athens. Appearances are given the lie by inner reality. Alcibiades also mentions how Socrates firmly resisted all his attempts to seduce them, though Socrates' erotic tendencies were known to everybody.

This theme apparently occurs in Phaedo's dialogue, *Zopyrus*. It is also mentioned in connection with the Megarian philosopher Stilpo to whom Cicero refers in this passage, just before he embarks on the *Zopyrus* material. Stilpo's friends write that he was excessively fond of drink and women, but they do not hold these propensities against him. They pay tribute to the way in which he overcame and repressed this sensual nature by means of philosophy, so that nobody ever saw him drunk or manifesting any sign of lust.

We have here an old Socratic theme that became a commonplace which was cherished by the great man's successors. Another commonplace may possibly be identified in the use of illustrations and examples in argument taken from various crafts and trades, which no doubt occurred in Phaedo's dialogue about the cobbler. In the *Symposium* Alcibiades makes fun of this trait of Socratic conversation, 'Always talking about smiths and cobblers and tanners, etc.' which seems ridiculous to those who 'don't know him' (Alcibiades' speech in Plato's *Symposium* 215a-222c).

No precise date can be determined for the composition of Plato's *Symposium*. There is wide agreement that it belongs in the early group of dialogues. This would suggest that it can hardly have been written before 390 BC. One or two hints in the text — in particular a possible reference (193a) to events in Mantinea of 385 BC — suggest around

383 BC. It may be that Phaedo's *Zopyrus* was composed around this time. The composition of Xenophon's *Symposium* cannot be dated precisely; but it may be as early as c. 380 BC. Theon of Alexandria, a writer on rhetoric (second century AD) in discussing styles of story-telling, mentions a *mythos* which occurs in Phaedo's *Zopyrus*:

They say, Socrates, that the Great King's youngest son gave a certain man a lion cub as a present. I think it was because it had been reared with (this man's) son, that it still followed him about wherever he went, even when he was a young man. And so the Persians used to say that the lion was in love with him. (Theon, *Progynasmata* 3.75)

Observe that Socrates is a participant in this dialogue, just as he is in most of Plato's dialogues. We see here again the contrast between inborn impulses and the mollifying effects of training and habituation. It is possible that both passages form part of a main theme of the *Zopyrus*, that of nature being tamed by reason.

Nothing in either of these passages need persuade us that Phaedo was a particularly inventive thinker. Either he is simply repeating and disseminating in his elegant writings familiar Socratic teaching, or else some personal and original contribution of his to the development of philosophy has been lost.

Crito

Crito of Athens, of the *deme* Alopeke, was a friend and patron of Socrates, and a main participant in the Platonic dialogue that carries his name and also in the *Apology* and the *Phaedo*. He was a man of sufficient wealth and good will to be able to offer patronage to Socrates. Diogenes Laertius includes a brief life of him in his second book, and he is mentioned by Xenophon (*Memorabilia Socratis* 1.3, 8; 2, 6; *Oeconomikos* 1-6; *Symposium* 4, 10). Diogenes Laertius says that he had a number of sons, Critobolus, Hermogenes, Epigenes, Ctesippus. 'Crito' mentions two sons in Plato's *Euthydemus* (306d).

Like many of the Socratics, he is supposed to have written dialogues. The theme of one of them, 'That men are not made good by learning', has a suspiciously, or, if you like, reassuringly Socratic ring, when we consider how Plato's Socrates wrestled with this problem. He was one of those who would have used his wealth to help Socrates escape from

imprisonment and execution in Athens, if Socrates had been willing. No doubt he was rich enough and generous enough to have bribed effectively all who needed persuasion to turn a blind eye to Socrates' departure.

Simmias

Simmias of Thebes was a friend of Socrates and a prominent participant in the *Phaedo*. Socrates pays tribute to his grasp of argument (*logos*) and his ingenuity of mind. Indeed, he is spoken of as a man of some genius (*Phaedo* 86d). In Plato's *Phaedrus* 242b, Simmias is said to have composed and delivered more speeches than anybody else, and the supposed titles are recorded by Diogenes Laertius (2.124). He is represented by Plato as having considerable energy in debate: Socrates (*Phaedo* 85c) says that Simmias likes to pursue an argument to its furthest conclusion.

Plato seems to have had a high opinion of him. We can reasonably infer that Socrates, who speaks highly of him in Plato's text, meant what he said. Plato had considerable sympathy for Pythagorean doctrine and ideas, and Simmias had been trained by the Pythagorean philosopher, Philolaus, who had come to live in Thebes after the political disasters which overwhelmed the Pythagoreans in the cities of Southern Italy. Simmias may have been well trained by this eminent refugee before he began to associate with Socrates. Probably he was some years older than Plato.

His writings no doubt come under the ban of Panaetius the Stoic's sceptical rejection of the Socratic writings that are not attributed to Plato, Aeschines or *Phaedo*. We possess no fragments of his works, but we may well hesitate to believe Panaetius, who, after all, rejected Plato's *Phaedo* as spurious.

Cebes

Cebes was a Theban, a pupil of Philolaus the Pythagorean, and together with Simmias he is represented in Plato's *Phaedo* as taking part in Socrates' last conversations (*Phaedo* 59c, 60c, 61c). He too is considered to be a sharp-witted dialectician. A foil to Simmias' inventiveness in logoi, he is, apparently, a sceptical arguer, very clever at raising objections (*Phaedo* 63a, 77a).

Diogenes Laertius says that Simmias wrote twenty-three dialogues and Cebes three. A work attributed to Cebes, called the *Pinax* (Mirror or Tablet) has been preserved. This elegant little allegorical dialogue on the human condition is unfortunately not a writing of Cebes. From the sixteenth century until the early nineteenth it was accepted as genuine and was often studied as a text in schools. John Milton praises it in his *Treatise on Education* of 1644.

The principal reason for rejecting it is that it quotes Plato's *Laws*, the latest work in Plato's long literary career; also that it mentions the *peripatetikoî*, the peripatetic school founded by Aristotle. It is hard to accept that Cebes, who like Simmias, probably was some years older than Plato, would be in a position to quote from Plato's last and unfinished work. The same chronological objection applies to the mention of the Peripatetics. Both suggest quite improbable longevity. Also there are disparaging references to *dialektikoî*, which seem strange in a Socratic, even if he lived long enough to repent of argumentative ways he learnt from his master. There is always the possibility that by *dialektikoî* the author means *eristikoî* of the word-chopping species ridiculed by Isocrates and satirised by Plato. But if this was the case, why did he not say so? Anyway, as we have seen, members of the Socratic diaspora were not averse to indulging in *eristike* from time to time — indeed it was almost unavoidable, given their puritanical narrowness on the question of 'being'. It has been said, too, that the work has a stoic flavour, whatever precisely this may be. We should remember that many aspects of the stoic philosophy flowed on in a natural development from that of Socratics and early Cynics, as far as these groups are distinguishable. And Stoics were eager practitioners of *dialektike*.

Yet in spite of Diogenes Laertius' mention of the *Pinax* as one of Cebes' three works (*Hebdome*, *Phrynichos*, *Pinax*), and Lucian's enthusiastic reference some fifty years earlier than Diogenes to a work of Cebes — whether the surviving text or some other — we cannot easily accept that the dialogue is the authentic work of Socrates' Theban friend and pupil. It is agreeable to record Lucian's comment: 'I want, like the famous Cebes, to compose an image of human life' (Lucian *Rhet. Praecept.* 6; *De Merc. Conduct.* 42.).

We leave Cebes by referring to the story, part of the tradition used both by Aulus Gellius (2.1.8) and Diogenes Laertius (2.17) that it was Cebes who purchased Phaedo's freedom. I think we must be cautious to the point of scepticism about stories of this kind which are part of the general body of biographical information handed down in commonplaces

borne through the centuries of post-Classical antiquity. Yet we may also ask, 'Why invent that particular story?' Is there smoke without fire?

Xenophon

Xenophon, son of Gryllus, was an Athenian and a friend of Socrates. He was not a philosopher, although he can be fairly called a 'Socratic'. We can attribute to him no arguments about the nature of being and no dialectical tricks or inventions. By a strange chance, he is the only pupil of Socrates apart from Plato whose *Sokratikoi Logoi* have survived, if we discount the authors of some minor dialogues usually included in the body of Plato's works which hardly count, for they were probably the compositions of some of Plato's students. Xenophon's Socratic works have been unfavourably compared with those of Plato. They were thought to provide an unconvincingly simple picture of Socrates in presenting him as a figure who can hardly be believed to have had such influence on his own contemporaries and following generations.

We have no precise knowledge of Xenophon's birth-date, but possibly 430 BC would be a reasonable suggestion. He is clearly younger than Socrates, but it was no untried youth who was invited by the Boeotian, Proxenos, to join in a mixed force of Greek mercenaries levied by Cyrus to fight against his brother Artaxerxes, King of Persia. This was in 401 BC, and on the advice of Socrates, Xenophon accepted the invitation. Others who were influenced by Socratic teaching, directly or indirectly, became active in politics as well as philosophy; but Xenophon was above all a man of action and adventure. The force which he joined won a notable victory at Cunaxa; but Cyrus was killed in the battle and the Greeks were left stranded in a hostile mainland without purpose and with little hope. Xenophon with others assumed leadership of what became a Greek city state on the march, and after many adventures the Greek army eventually reached home. Xenophon's account of this expedition and its consequences is the *Anabasis*, the 'Journey up Country'. This is his best-known work.

Xenophon admired Sparta for the courage and endurance which were fostered by its system of education and living. His essay on the Spartan king Agesilaus is in this spirit. He was not alone amongst the friends of Socrates in holding such a view of Sparta. Antisthenes was of the same opinion. Socrates himself, though he was a patriotic

Athenian, cultivated a Spartan type of personal hardiness, and endurance of hardship became a 'doctrinal' feature of the cynic movement. A monograph on the Spartan constitution is attributed to Xenophon; though Antisthenes has also been suggested as its author. Plato favoured a constitution for a better form of political life in his *Republic*, and this embodied a blend of Spartan and Athenian characteristics. His *Laws*, though not so radical in its reduction of the life of the Greek *polis* to austere simplicity, still has Sparta clearly in view. A number of Socrates' aristocratic friends who were involved in the oligarchic revolution at the end of the fifth century BC were perhaps more anti-democratic than pro-Spartan; but there was a fashionable Spartanism amongst members of this social group at the time (Plato, *Gorgias* 515e, 8). Xenophon's admiration of Sparta took the form of participation on the Spartan side in the campaign that led to the battle of Coronea in 394 BC. He was under the command of Agesilaus, a Spartan king of rare individuality, whose simplicity and acute directness have some resemblance to the philosophical austerity we see in people like Antisthenes. The Athenians, against whom Xenophon found himself fighting, rightly considered his action as treasonable, and he was exiled from Athens. The Spartans gave him some land at Scillus, a place they had taken from Elis, and he lived here for many years until the people of Elis recovered the territory from Sparta and expelled him. He is said to have lived for a time in Corinth. When Athens and Sparta joined in alliance against the threatening power of Thebes, he was restored to his city and presumably he died there some time after 360 BC, which is the latest date to which he alludes in his historical work, the *Hellenica*.

He was a man of action rather than a philosopher. He was a man of high ability, but it was not ability in dialectic. He was an expert soldier, and his success in Persia in leading a mixed force of Greeks to safety under terrible conditions proves his political tact and adroitness. His talent as a writer provided his achievements with a vehicle that would influence others. The *Anabasis* demonstrated the internal slackness of the massive Persian empire, and its information encouraged Philip II of Macedon to conceive, and his son Alexander to accomplish, its conquest. In his historical work the *Hellenica* he is an accomplished continuator of Thucydides, though not his equal in analysis of the events from 411 BC, where Thucydides' account stops, to 362 BC. He shows himself to be perceptive in portraying individual character. His knowledge of military matters is purposefully deployed. His philosophical interests emerge in his book the *Cyropaedia*, on the upbringing

of Cyrus the Great, who founded the Persian empire that the *Anabasis* helped to destroy. The values of simplicity in style of life, courage and honesty are promoted in what is really a work of hagiography rather than history. These are values of Socrates and the Socratic schools, but they are approached from a different angle: by narrative, almost by mythos, rather than by dialectic.

He wrote monographs on riding, cavalry tactics, revenues (*Poroi*). He wrote dialogues in which Socrates is an important participating character. His aim in the *Reminiscences about Socrates*, usually known by its Latin title, *Memorabilia Socratis*, was to defend the credit of his friend against criticism. Polycrates in particular wrote attacks on Socrates, and these needed rebuttal. The *Oeconomikos* is principally about housekeeping, and in it Socrates is almost a lay figure. This book is very informative about Greek attitudes to family life and day-to-day living, but it tells us little or nothing about philosophy. Like Plato, Xenophon wrote an *Apologia* or defence of Socrates, and a *Symposium*.

All of these writings are of a very basic nature in comparison with Plato's Socratic dialogues. Xenophon's *Apologia* illustrates this. Instead of the powerful, sinuous, philosophical eloquence of the speeches Plato attributes to his teacher, we have a basic pamphlet directed in pamphleteering style against Polycrates. The author's intention is not to reproduce Socrates' speeches, but to argue in third-person narrative as well as in a speech put into Socrates' mouth, that Socrates was really pious towards the gods and that he did not stoop to beseech the jury to spare his life because he was so old it was not worth his while! Also it is to prove that he was always righteous in his dealings with his fellow men. Plato and Xenophon both agree that Socrates virtually determined his own death and that the *daimonion* or 'divine sign' forbade him to take measures to save his own life. The *Symposium*, like the *Apologia*, has similarities to Plato's work of the same name, but is of a notably different character. There is no coincidence, apart from Socrates, in the participants of the two *Symposia*. Both involve the discussion of love that was a sustaining element in such drinking parties. Xenophon's *Symposium* does include an interesting portrait of Antisthenes which we shall discuss later. The *Memorabilia*, a much longer work, also rehearses the charges against Socrates and goes on to refute them, another blow at Polycrates. However, the main body of the work is intended as reminiscences of Socrates' character. Various topics are argued by the great man illustrating his goodness and wisdom. The unifying strand is Socrates' own character. As in other

Socratic works of Xenophon, Socrates appears to be a more quaint individual, pawky, sometimes a little coarse in manner, and often sententious. He does not approach general ideas very often, which squares with Aristotle's references to him and differs from Plato's account of his thought. But he is recognisably the same person as the Socrates who figures in Plato's dialogues, save that he is less elegant in manner, less brilliant in discourse, and much less of a philosopher. Qualities of hardihood and honesty remain in both portraits, so also does the concentrated importance Socrates attributes to knowledge and its acquisition. In estimating the limitations of Xenophon's Socrates, which some say are the limitations of Xenophon himself, we have to ask ourselves whether the higher qualities of Plato's Socrates were not the qualities of Plato himself. Xenophon had the distinct gift of conveying character in his writings. Even if he did not understand all that Socrates had to teach, it remains more than merely possible that he gives us a certain flavour of the real man's character. At all events, Xenophon's own life, full of action and bold enterprises, usually with the motivation of some direct principle, has in its overall honesty of purpose and in its endurance, a distinct colour of Socraticism. His master's teachings were not lost on him.

Aeschines

A most faithful adherent of Socrates, according to Diogenes Laertius, was Aeschines, son of Lysanias of Sphettos, who possibly was a seller of sausages. Plato mentions him in the *Apology* (33e) as being present at Socrates' trial, and he was with Socrates on the day of his death. He was poor all his life: 'I have nothing to give you' he is reputed to have said to Socrates, 'I give you only myself'. (Diogenes Laertius 2.61-3). Plato, and perhaps Aristippus as well, tried to benefit him by introducing him to the younger Dionysius, but this effort at patronage did not work. He went to Syracuse but came back no less poor than he went. We suppose that he did not differ much in age from Plato, although we should have to consider him somewhat older if he is the Aeschines referred to in Aristophanes' *Wasps* (459 f). This is not likely, for Aristophanes' butt is the son of Sellos, and Plato says that this Socratic disciple was the son of Lysanias.

He was a brilliant writer and stylist who wrote *Sokratikoi Logoi*. We have some titles of these, including *Miltiades*, *Callias*, *Axiochus*, *Aspasia*, *Alcibiades*. He is supposed to have shown Socrates' personality

most vividly and authentically in his writings, but he had the unfortunate reputation of being a plagiarist. We need not pay much attention to the story told by Athenaeus (611a) that his dialogues were not his own, but really those of Socrates, which were given to him by Socrates' widow, Xanthippe. There is no reason at all to believe that Socrates left writings behind him.

Athenaeus tells us another story which is plausible, especially as it is accompanied by what most likely is a substantial quotation from a speech of the distinguished orator, Lysias. In this speech Aeschines is attacked for being fraudulent in the matter of a sum of money that he owed. If you expect a speech for the prosecution in a case like this to attempt to blacken the defendant's character in money matters as much as possible, you would not be disappointed. It seems that he was a very bad risk indeed. Also, a theme almost irresistible for a prosecutor, a contrast is made between Aeschines' philosophical pretensions and his actual conduct.

He was in no way original in intellect, and it is possible that the charge of plagiarism, less serious in the ancient world than it is today, is substantial enough. Even if he could not steal from Socrates, he probably did copy Antisthenes in some of his writings. He was not so much a thinker as a journalist. His irresponsibility — there is enough evidence to convict him at least of this failing — suggests an anticipation of cynic carelessness about the regularities of life. Against this we need to set the statements that he was helped, or at least tolerated, by Plato and Aristippus. Athenaeus was puzzled by him. 'From his writings,' he says, 'you would suppose he was an honourable man.' Perhaps he was, after his own fashion.

Euclides

Euclides (Megarian School) was not an original thinker; but he was an enthusiastic philosopher who undoubtedly helped to keep alive the questioning, critical and restless spirit of Socrates' method. If he had not been so dedicated to the rigid and exhaustive notion of 'being' that admitted only one mode or kind in which a thing could 'be', namely complete, unalterable and real existence, he might have made some advance. But his lack of inventiveness might have prevented him, just as it may have allowed him to be attracted to a harsh and sterile Eleatically coloured ontological faith at a time when a more creative writer of Socratic dialogue, Plato, was representing his teacher's

subtle, insinuating and radical style of asking questions about matters that ordinary people took for granted.

Many of the Socratics appear to have been limited in this way. Antisthenes is a prime example of this tunnel vision which understood 'being' in only one way. We shall meet others who have a comparably restrictive view, though not the talent and intensity of Antisthenes.

Plato's literary genius has stamped a picture of Socratic method upon our minds, and his influence does not allow us to see that this narrowness on the subject of what it is 'to be' persisted long into his time and was familiar enough to attract derision from Isocrates. There was, perhaps, a certain Puritan zeal in those for whom the Socratic method had assumed this unbending and unproductive form. And then, as far as our ordinary Classical view of the question is concerned, we are not allowed to recover from being dazzled by Plato before we are taken in hand by Aristotle, the first to set forth clearly the various ways in which a thing can be said 'to be', an advance that Plato did not quite manage to achieve.

Euclides was present at the death of Socrates. He was born in Megara, but we do not know the date of his birth. It has been suggested, but merely by conjecture, that he was somewhat older than Plato (b. 428 BC). The fact that he was in Athens on that day and that he was able to provide a centre of refuge and stability for the scattered friends of Socrates after the execution, may indicate that he was indeed somewhat older than Plato. Although he seems to have been a devoted friend of Socrates, he was influenced strongly by the austere polarised views of being/not being associated with Eleatic teaching and his mode of argument, the 'eristic' for which he and his followers became famous, was more severe and contentious than the dialectic of the Platonic Socrates. The Megarian School, of which he was the founder, came into being when some of Socrates' friends fled to Megara from Athens after Socrates' execution. The kind of teaching instituted remained discernible until the third century BC.

We know that Euclides was with Socrates at his death (*Phaedo* 59c). Aulus Gellius (6.10) says that Euclides used to come to Athens secretly by night to visit his teacher. Since 432 BC Megara, its citizens and its products had been under ban in Athens. Megara was a Dorian city and on the side of Sparta and its allies in the Peloponnesian war, and Pericles' enactments about Megara were one of the first acts of belligerence in that protracted conflict. Euclides would have been in peril of his life if he had been arrested on Athenian territory. Hence

the nocturnal secrecy and the story that he took the precaution of dressing in women's clothes to make discovery more difficult. This account may or may not be true, but it could be that he visited Socrates regularly. It is hard to imagine, in a town like Athens, that he could have spent the whole of Socrates' last day with him in a public building, namely the prison, without some talk of the matter getting out. Possibly in the circumstances the authorities chose to ignore the fact of his presence.

Euclides is one of the participants in the *Theaetetus* of Plato. Another Socratic, Terpsion, a Megarian philosopher also, is a character in the circumstantial plot outside a plot that envelops the main dialogue which Euclides is made to say he has heard from Plato and written down. This envelope of conversation mentions as an incident the death of Theaetetus, a brilliantly promising mathematician, as a result of wounds he received in a battle near Corinth that can be dated 369 BC.

If Plato can credibly represent Euclides as being alive and active in philosophy at or at least shortly after this date, then we may be sure we have a firm chronological reference for his life span. If he in person actually taught Stilpo and Pasicles, we can be reasonably sure he lived a few years more, at least until 360 BC.

Euclides' eristic was concerned mainly with conclusions; not with the premises upon which these were based. This seems to mean that he emphasised the contradictory character of conclusions to which arguments led rather than the process of reasoning which led to them. The sophistic refutation that Plato puts into his *Euthydemus* probably illustrates the way in which he argued. Diogenes Laertius also mentions that he would not accept arguments based on comparison or analogy, or similarity (Diogenes Laertius 2.107 f). Argument by means of comparisons uses examples of things which are like each other or unlike each other. But it is much better, argued Euclides, to talk about the things themselves rather than things which are merely like them; and there is no point at all, he said, in talking about things which are unlike the things you have under consideration.

Clearly there is an Eleatic rigour in this attitude. Euclides concentrated upon what is real, what really is, and everything else he treated as mere irrelevance. He argues that a thing can only be what it is: likeness and unlikeness have no usefulness nor reality. We may be reminded of Antisthenes' assertion that all you can predicate relevantly or truly or definitively of a thing is what it is, that *A* is *A*, and you cannot say meaningfully that *A* is not *A*, or *A* is *x*. Euclides, like Antisthenes, had fanatical zeal for the pursuit of what (in reality) *is*, for 'being'; and no

substitute was satisfactory. Antisthenes was prepared to allow that you could say *A* is like *B* for illustrative rather than strictly defining purposes, and we may perhaps concede that he was a little more tolerant in this than Euclides. Neither of them had much time for talk about anything but what actually 'is': likeness, unlikeness, negativity, all these were of little or no importance logically, though they would have to be used in ordinary conversation as a matter of convenience.

The Eleatic influence upon Euclides was apparent to ancient writers who mention the Megarians. Cicero tells us that it was to be seen in Menedemus also, who was not a Megarian, but an 'Eretrian'. The differences between some of the branches of the Socratic 'Schools' are not great and there are significant overlaps:

The Megarian School was well known. I read that its founder was Xenophanes, whom I have just mentioned, then Parmenides followed him, and Zeno, and the Eleatic philosophers were named after these [they were both citizens of Elea in South Italy]. Afterwards came Euclides, a pupil of Socrates, a Megarian, and in the same way those philosophers were called Megarians who maintained that the supreme good was that which was one and consistent and always the same. They also were influenced in many ways by Plato. Those who followed Menedemus were called Eretrians because he was from Eretria. They considered that the supreme good resided in the mind and in the mind's ability to comprehend the truth. (Cicero, *Academica Priora* 2. 129)

Euclides and other 'Megarian' pupils of Socrates (and some other non-Megarian Socratics) were influenced by the view that *being* is *one*, which originally comes from Parmenides of Elea. A consequence of this view is that it becomes impossible to apply predicates to being apart from 'it is'. You can hardly even say of it that it is *one* for in doing so you are saying that it is something other than itself, and are denying its pure unity even at the very moment of asserting that unity!

Euclides seems to have taken this 'oneness' and applied it to the 'good'. Like Socrates, he was as much, if not more, interested in questions of goodness and moral value as he was in the question of 'being'. Just as the Eleatics maintained that you could not say that the opposite of 'being', that is 'not being', exists — such a statement is in their assumptions self-contradicting — so Euclides states that the opposite of 'good' cannot exist.

As we have seen, the influence of Eleatic 'logic' of this kind was strong in many viewpoints and arguments of the Sophistic movement.

Statements involving the verb 'to be' invariably involved the notion of 'being' in the sense of real, genuine existence, not the mere linking of a predicate to a subject to express what that subject is in part, as in, for instance, the statements the apple *is round*, or, the apple *is green*. This exhaustive 'existential' meaning of the verb 'to be' allowed no such variations or dilutions of 'being'. Consequently two examples of the kind I mention would be held to be contradictory of each other.

This information about Euclides probably comes from a source book written by a doxographer. Cicero's statements and those of Diogenes Laertius have much in common. Diogenes also tells us how Euclides took over and adapted Parmenides' teachings.

Many other references to Euclides also show signs of having a common source, probably doxographic. Cicero and Diogenes were very probably informed by the same writer or writers who at some level made use of the same sources. This very probable use of *Doxographi* need not cast any adverse reflection on the plausibility of what the record has to say. The main points most likely are accurately transmitted. Doubts have been expressed whether Euclides was influenced by Eleatic doctrine, and indeed it is not impossible that Cicero and Diogenes Laertius could be misinformed by their sources. However, the Socratics and the later Sophists were interested in arguments of a distinctly Eleatic kind, such as 'you cannot say what is not' — the conviction that there was something illicit and irrational about negative sentences. When Plato wrote his *Parmenides* late in his career, the Eleatic doctrines were still important enough to justify the exercise. And an Eleatic stranger leads the discussion on 'being' in the *Sophist*. Eleatic thinking was still a power in the land.

Xenophanes said that god was a unity and not an anthropoid or any particular shape. His view, recorded by Theophrastus, that being was one and universal and neither finite nor infinite, nor moving nor still, has sufficient resemblance to Parmenides' view that being was one, unchanging, ungenerated, etc. Theophrastus was the first we know to have said that Xenophanes taught Parmenides. Whether or not this is true, Xenophanes' views that god was a unity are close to those of Euclides.

Euclides declared that good was 'one', though it was called by many names: sometimes thought, at other times intellect, etc. He rejected opposites to the good, declaring that they did not exist. (Diogenes Laertius 2. 106)

Euclides is said to have written a number of dialogues. The names of

six survive: *Alciabides*, *Aeschines*, *Crito*, *Phoenix*, *Lampias*, *Erotikos*. There were some others. We shall never know for certain how many he wrote or that these were their names; but clearly he wrote some dialogues. Panaetius, the Stoic, accepted the genuineness of Plato's dialogues and Xenophon's; he was doubtful about those attributed to Phaedo and Euclides, and rejected all the others (Diogenes Laertius 2. 64, *Suidas*: 'Euclides'). If the lost dialogues of Socratic philosophers contained fabrications of events, then confusion on the question of authorship was inevitable. We are not likely to discover what Panaetius' reasons were for doubting the authenticity of Euclides' works.

Ichthyas

Ichthyas ('Megarian School') was a follower of Euclides. This is all that we know about him (Diogenes Laertius 2. 112). The Cynic Diogenes is said to have dedicated a dialogue to him.

Eubulides

Eubulides of Miletus ('Megarian School') is mentioned as one of Euclides' successors (Diogenes Laertius 2. 108). He is said to have attacked Aristotle's work and personality in a violent and abusive way. Several authors mention him as a teacher of the orator Demosthenes. As a dialectician he is said to have propounded a number of logical puzzles. One of these is the 'liar': if a man who tells lies says he is telling lies, is he a liar or not? If he is lying to you, he is a truthful man really; if he is telling you the truth, he is admitting to you that he is a liar.

We recall the old puzzle that appears in Phocylides' lines (mid-sixth century BC): 'Cretans are liars: Phocylides is a Cretan, and he is telling you this'. Also the 'hidden man' which is: 'Do you know that man who is hidden?'. 'No, how could I?' 'Well, he's your father, so you don't know your own father!' Of much the same character is 'the veiled man': 'Who is the man with his face covered?' 'I don't know.' 'You mean you don't know your own...?' And so on. In the 'Electra' puzzle, Electra, in Euripides' tragedy, meets her brother but does not know who he is when she meets him: therefore 'she does not know her own brother'. But she knows her brother is Orestes: therefore she

knows and does not know the same person at the same time. This is the awkward position into which Dionysodorus and Euthydemus manoeuvre their victims in Plato's *Euthydemus*.

Another argumentative trick which Eubulides is said to have proposed is the *Sorites* — a 'heaping up' is what it means. The problem is: how many grains do you need to make up a heap — one, twenty-five, a thousand? It is impossible to give a definitive answer. Even if you work from the other end you cannot get out of trouble. Suppose you agree that a heap consists of one thousand individual grains, or any small constituents you wish. Is nine hundred and ninety-nine still a heap? And your questioner goes on dismantling the heap grain by grain, asking you each time one more item is removed, 'Is this still a heap?'. Of course it is impossible to give a definitive answer. The same logical blockage can be achieved by imagining a man having the hairs of his head plucked out one by one: just when can he validly be described as bald?

Then there is the paradox involving human possession of horns. If you agree that you possess what you have not lost, and agree further that you have not lost a pair of horns, then you admit that you possess horns!

Of these the 'liar' and 'Sorites' are the only problems of logical significance. The others can be dismissed as word-play. The 'liar' has given a great deal of trouble. The poet and scholar Philetas (late fifth century BC) is said to have killed himself because he could not solve it. The Stoics were remarkably interested in these contradictions. Chrysippus, one of the most eminent stoic thinkers, is said to have written a number of books on the 'liar' paradox. Later Epictetus said he wished to understand what Chrysippus had meant by writing so much on this one topic.

There were two main ways of tackling the 'liar' according to Chrysippus: one of these attacks the premises of the argument; the other solves it by division, or analysis, of the argument itself. At any rate, a lot of work was involved which struck later authorities as superfluous. Aristotle deals with this problem, which is in his words 'whether a man can tell lies and truth at the same time' in his treatise *Sophistici Elenchi* (Sophistic Fallacies) 180b:

If we use a word not in its proper sense but in a way in which its use is logically meaningful only with regard to a particular thing, a particular place, or in a special manner or in a distinct relation to something, and not in its absolute, unqualified meaning, we can

only solve the difficulty by comparing the conclusion of the argument in which it is used, with the contradiction of that conclusion, to see if something of this kind has caused a difficulty. For opposites and contradictions, affirmations and negatives, cannot be said of the same thing without qualification, but there is nothing to prevent each of them being said of it in a special respect or relation or manner; or one of them can be said of it in a special way and the other in an absolute way.

You can say x is y or not y in a whole variety of different moods and strengths. Aristotle continues:

The same argument applies to the question whether a man can tell lies and truth at the same time. Because it is not readily discernible whether you can say the man is absolutely telling the truth or lying absolutely, the matter presents difficulties. Nothing prevents a man from being an absolute liar and yet in some way to be telling the truth, or that some of a person's utterances should be true, but he himself not truthful.

Modern solutions of the 'liar' involve a 'hierarchy of languages' which means that the statement 'I am a liar' and other versions of the 'liar' need to be seen as having at least two levels of meaning. The statement cannot simply be about itself; there must be another statement on another logical level that makes it meaningful. This statement, $L + 1$ let us call it, determines whether 'I am a liar' is true or false in this instance. When I say I am lying, I am really making an unspoken statement about the truth or falsity of 'I am lying'. You can express it by 'There is a statement such that "I am lying" is true/false'.

Aristotle, from a somewhat different point of view, seems to have produced a solution which has some resemblance to the modern one in that it assumes different kinds of meaning. A man can be an absolute liar, and yet he may happen uncharacteristically to make a true statement. It is only if you think the liar can on no account by definition tell the truth that you have the contradiction. The fact he is a liar does not entail that every statement he makes is false, for not all statements are to be taken on the same level. In short, if you believe that there is only one level of truth or reality, i.e. one way of saying 'is', the solution will not work.

The fact that he tells lies is taken to be at a different logical level from the statement he makes 'I am lying'. If we put it like this we

can, I think, see how Aristotle is on very much the same wavelength as Russell and others who have attempted to solve the paradox.

If on the other hand you think that all statements that involve 'being' (e.g. 'I am a liar.' 'My last statement is false') involve 'being' in the sense of something that has a real incontrovertible existence, and that 'being' is in its nature homogeneous, and cannot be modified or diluted, then the problem of the liar remains with you, as it remained for Euclides and for the Stoics.

Aristippus

A friend of Socrates who was absent from his death scene was Aristippus of Cyrene. Together with others who are successors to his particular version of Socratic philosophy, Aristippus is usually called a 'Cyrenaic', and his 'school' was known by this name from antiquity. The Cyrenaics differ from other Socratics whom we have been considering in that they take little account of the question of 'being'. Dialectic and the investigation of nature meant little to them. They were more concerned with living and with its prime aim and motive — pleasure:

They [the Cyrenaics] accepted that they experience imaginations and emotions within themselves, but they did not think that these provided convincing proofs that external things were real. They shut themselves up in their own emotions as if they were under siege, asserting 'it seems', but taking no steps to prove 'it is'. (Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1. 120c)

There is an element of subjectivity in this that goes beyond anything we would attribute to Protagoras. Cicero wisely suggests that we observe the distinction between the two:

Protagoras' view of the basis of judgement is that for each person truth is what seems to him true; very different is that of the Cyrenaics, who think that nothing can be taken into account on this question except internal emotions; while the Epicureans regard all basis of judgement as residing in the senses, in perception of events and in pleasure. (Cicero, *Academica Priora* 2. 42, 131)

The Cyrenaics are unsure of the external world: pleasure is all that is reliably apprehensible. They admit that words are used by all of us and

have meanings common to us all, but these do not constitute a criterion, a means or basis of judgement. Mathematical truths and arguments they regard as irrelevant:

Some of the Sophists, for instance Aristippus, ridicule mathematics. They argue that even in the lowliest of arts, carpentry or cobbling, such things are done either better or done worse, but mathematics has nothing to say about good or bad. (*Ar. Met.* 990a, 32)

The good and the beautiful are different. The good is realised in actions; the beautiful in immobile things. Hence those who say that mathematics have nothing to say on such questions are wrong. (*Ar. Met.* 1078a, 31)

We can see that according to Aristotle, Aristippus and those who think like him are Sophists. He does not see a sharp distinction between this Socratic and the sophistic movement; but regards them as continuous. Some passages in Isocrates also convey this idea unequivocally. Although it is better to be cautious in attempts to identify targets of attack and refutation in ancient philosophical texts when these targets are not specifically named, I can see no reason to doubt that in the second passage Aristotle is attacking Aristippus. No doubt Aristippus expressed his opinion of mathematics in a challenging way in order to cause surprise and stimulate argument; a paradox after the fashion of Socrates. Mathematics are a part of external reality, not relevant to pleasure, involving a notion of non-emotional truth that is of no importance to him. Nevertheless, it appears that Cyrenaics did grant some importance to 'causes', both natural and argumentative, and to dialectic. They preferred to suggest that they did not.

Most of our information about Aristippus' life and thought comes from Diogenes Laertius, and while, as always, we must treat Diogenes' remarks with almost as much caution as gratitude, I think we can agree that he gives us a reasonably acceptable picture of the man and his teaching. For information about other Cyrenaics we are equally dependent on Diogenes, though we have occasional supporting material from Xenophon, Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Suidas, Eusebius and others. As far as Aristippus is concerned, we may accept the following account as credible enough.

Aristippus came of a wealthy family of Cyrene. He heard of Socrates' great reputation as a teacher and came to Athens to learn from him. At this time he was by no means a mere youth, but a grown

man, already formed in his personality and views by sophistic teaching which was available in the rich and important city from which he came. Protagoras' influence there can be inferred from the statement in Plato's *Theaetetus* that the mathematician Theodorus of Cyrene was a friend of Protagoras. Aristippus may have visited Sicily in the time of the older Dionysius; and he was there in 361 BC, the year of Plato's last visit to the island. He was approximately of Plato's generation.

He is said to have written a number of dialogues, though Diogenes cites an ancient authority, Sosicrates of Rhodes, who denies it. We have no direct evidence of his writing, but no reason to believe Sosicrates implicitly. The range of anecdotes — one or two of which are also told of Antisthenes — show a vivid, witty and ingenious personality. He cared little about establishing a respectable reputation in society, an attitude he shares with the Cynics. Nor did he have any interest in setting up a philosophical community like Plato, Aristotle or Epicurus. He wanted money to spend, not to keep. He is said to have been the first of Socrates' immediate circle to seek payment for his teaching. He was careless of himself and his family in a way that also reminds us of the Cynics, though he made his daughter Arete a philosopher capable of passing on his message to her son, the younger Aristippus. In his outspokenness and also his delight in the tactless and outrageous remarks he resembled the Cynics.

Pleasure was the only reality, according to him, and he was philosophically serious in his advancement of this view. All things seek pleasure and avoid pain: this is universally to be observed. Pleasure is the end or purpose, the good which is good for its own sake. Pleasure bodily and positive, he meant, not a mere absence of pain. Pleasure that relates to a portion of one's feelings is the good in itself; happiness as a state is not a good in itself but is an aggregation of pleasures, including those that are passed together with anticipated pleasures. Not all pleasures experienced in the mind are dependent upon the body. For example, a person can feel pleasure at the glory or prosperity of his country, and this has nothing at all to do with the body. Pleasures remembered and those to which you look forward are not bodily pleasures. Nevertheless, it is bodily pleasure that is strongest and more genuine in its effect, and bodily pleasure is more intense than that of the mind or soul. Mere sight or hearing can provide pleasure, but not of the strongest or most genuine kind. For we must take into account that imitations of anguish and pain in art can give pleasure, whereas the reality would cause pain. Sight and hearing, therefore, can hardly be regarded as sufficient bases of judgement. Nobody can expect a life of

unalloyed enjoyment; there is an inevitable quantum of pain to be endured. The main thing is that pleasures should predominate. The wise man should therefore avoid attitudes which cause anguish, such as jealousy or superstitious fear or anger. Enough griefs will come his way in the ordinary course of events without these. He should not be unduly concerned if the acts which provide him with pleasure are ungraceful or absurd: pleasure is not to be identified with what causes it. Friendship is not good in itself, but for its usefulness in life — this is not far from the general practice and theory of friendship in the Greek world. Thought is not good in itself, but is valued for the good, that is the pleasure, it can bring. Logic is useful for sorting out things that are imperfectly understood; but it is not possible really to possess knowledge of anything.

This summary indicates, I believe, that Aristippus was a genuine philosopher with a well-rounded view of the world. The fact that he was clearly no serious practitioner of self-denial should not mislead us into thinking him frivolous. The apparent levity he shows in some of the anecdotes about him represents a Socratic trait: they intend, like Socrates' jocular and ironical mode of conversation, to rouse those who hear them to thought. The Sophists, as we have seen, practised similar shock tactics by means of startling and paradoxical witticisms. Like Socrates he is not sure that anything can really be known. As far as the surviving material about him goes, and with necessary caution about accepting the anecdotal tradition in Diogenes Laertius at face value, it still can be said fairly that in his demeanour and his doubts about the possibility of knowing anything, he resembles Socrates.

Aristippus' adoption of pleasure as the principle and motive of life is honest and courageous. He avoids the problems associated with hedonism, especially those of the kind: what is true pleasure, immediate gratification or immediate pain willingly undergone for a future gratification or advantage? His assertion that immediate pleasure of a physical origin is the thing to be sought for itself, the genuine thing, as it were, may seem simplistic at first sight; but it enables him to skirt round various complications and objections. Pleasure, he says, is a 'smooth movement'; hardship or pain is a 'rough movement'. We are not told in what these movements consist or what they themselves are. Presumably they have some kind of biological origin, movements of the body informing the mind. We cannot tell. It does appear, however, that he gave some thought to the 'bio-psychological' nature of pleasure.

The main stream of Greek traditional ethos did not approve excessive pleasure; just as it thought extreme pain was harmful. Distrust of

extremes of emotion occurs frequently in Plato, whose dialogues also contain many criticisms of the view that pleasure is equivalent to the good and many examples of pleasure that is morally debilitating and disadvantageous. Unrestrained pursuit of self-gratification by means of all kinds of pleasure is one of the characteristics of the tyrant according to Plato in his *Republic*. Yet again and again arguments are put in the mouth of Plato's Socrates that assume pleasure as a motivation, or at least assume that when people take thought or action, it is with some gratifying or advantageous end in view. And according to Plato's writings, there are pleasures of various kinds and varied consequences. Mere animal pleasure he never approved. Aristippus' viewpoint would in general be understood; but at its most radical level never approved. The road to virtue was harder than the ordinary pathway through life. Great and advantageous achievements required effort and toil. Aristippus knew that toil (*ponos*), hardship and the like were unavoidable; he taught that occasions of *ponos* should be avoided as much as possible. The Cynics, following the lead of Antisthenes and Prodicus before him (see Chapter 2) praised *ponos* as a means of acquiring virtue.

Hegesias

Hegesias (a 'Cyrenaic philosopher') in the time of Ptolemy Soter (d. 283 BC) held views not unlike those of Aristippus. But there are some important differences between his teachings and those of the earlier 'Cyrenaic'. Like Aristippus he regarded pleasure as the main pivot of human motivation. He also attributed importance to pleasure's correlative, *ponos*. Again, like Aristippus, he rejected the idea that friendship, gratitude and the performance of kindly actions were good in themselves or to be undertaken for their own sake. They were to serve some need or use and were not, apart from this, good. According to him, they had no existence apart from their usefulness: when that was finished, so were they.

Unlike Aristippus he did not accept that a state of happiness could arise from a number of partial or individual pleasures. His objection was based on the discontinuity of pleasurable experience. The mind not only feels pleasure along with the body; it also grieves in sympathy with its pains and hardships, which are inevitable. It is just as likely therefore that a person will be suffering pain at a given moment as that he will be enjoying pleasure. Also chance frequently cuts off expectation of pleasure. The condition described as happiness cannot therefore emerge from our mixed series of experiences.

Nor did he think that there is anything that in itself is pleasurable or painful. People react differently to their experiences; what is entirely acceptable to me causes anguish in you. Life and death are equally preferable, and the wise man will not care to distinguish between them. He will act for himself alone, for nobody else is sufficiently important to motivate his actions. The senses are not reliable indicators of truth. No certain knowledge can be had from them or from any source. Knowledge cannot be attained (an afterglow of Socratic ignorance and sophistic scepticism?); yet man does what seems to be indicated by his reason. He follows likelihood since certainty is denied him. There is no way in which he can tell which ideas or judgements are true. In his state of inevitable ignorance he can do no more. And sometimes he will make mistakes. This too is unavoidable and always unintentional. Like Socrates, Hegesias thought that nobody commits error consciously or willingly. His rough guide for living was that evil may be equated with pain, good with pleasure. Not that unalloyed pleasure was a realistic aim in life. Freedom from pain is what we should seek.

I have hinted that his opinion that knowledge is unattainable is a Socratic touch in Hegesias. It follows the Socratic teaching that we should seek to scrutinise and to know ourselves and our own limitations, which is in line with the Delphic oracle's command 'man know thyself that thou art mortal'. This is a traditional as well as a Socratic theme. Pindar says 'become what you understand yourself to be', that is, that we should seek to learn what we are and act accordingly. Hegesias' emphasis on the importance of reason is no less Socratic and no less traditionally Greek. Avoidance of pain is what any reasonable person will aim at; but perhaps we also have in this teaching of Hegesias an indication of the hard and in many ways hopeless nature of late fourth-century-BC society in which the city state and its freedom and pride meet humiliation after humiliation, and it seems reasonable to retreat from the open life of the *agora* and assembly. Avoid stimulus, for the likelihood of its being agreeable is negligible. We seem to hear Epicurus advocating *ataraxia*: that retreat from stimulus into a calm, indifferent, but not stupified frame of the mind.

Anniceris

Anniceris (a 'Cyrenaic philosopher') who lived in the time of Alexander, also believed that pleasure was the greatest good. In taking any action, we aim at the pleasure which we hope will come from it. Also good are

friendship, benevolence and a sense of gratitude. Even though the wise man cannot say that life has any overall purpose, he will seek to possess good characteristics and to enjoy the pleasure that comes from honourable acts and kind relationships. He will keep to this course even if it involves discomfort and pain in the short term; for eventually he will be rewarded with happiness for his good acts. It is important to learn respect for the feelings of others; failure in this will produce bad characteristics in us, which may well lead to unhappiness.

This gentlemanly code, with its emphasis upon sympathetic consideration for others, is nearer to Socrates in its explanation of motives for action than the doctrines of other Cyrenaics who tend to embrace self-interest with courageous frankness. Anniceris' suggestion that immediate discomfort may lead to a higher happiness later on is Socratic. We remember Socrates' 'paradox': 'no harm can come to the good man'; but man, according to Socrates, has to learn to pursue goodness, and even death is better than doing something that cannot be reconciled with one's awareness of good. This is the Socrates of the *Apologia*, the *Crito* and the *Phaedo*, and we have an echo of him in Anniceris.

Theodorus

Diogenes Laertius says that Theodorus (a 'Cyrenaic philosopher' active around 308 BC) was a pupil of Anniceris and Dionysius the dialectician; Suidas says that he was taught by Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, and by Pyrrho the Sceptic. He regarded pleasure and grief as the most important moving factors in life. Pleasure, according to him, was connected with knowledge, anguish with ignorance. Inadequate though Cyrenaics were in their theory of knowledge (as far as our evidence of them goes) it might be reasonable to think that Theodorus regarded knowledge as attainable.

He is best known to antiquity for being an *atheos*, one who rejected the gods. An *atheos*, you will recall, is not strictly the equivalent of a modern atheist, for he does not necessarily deny the existence of deity completely. It is one thing to reject the gods, another to deny their existence. In the case of Theodorus we cannot be certain whether he denied the existence of all gods, or merely the popularly worshipped ones. Cicero is definite that Theodorus said there were no gods at all (*De Natura Deorum* 1. 12). He classes him with the well-known *atheos* Diagoras of Melos. If Theodorus actually influenced Epicurus' view of

the gods and was in fact thoroughly atheistic in the modern sense, then we must infer that Epicurus, who thought the gods existed but did not care about us, decided to follow his views. We may mention Antisthenes' view that people worship many gods, but the god of nature is one.

Theodorus was most aggressive and argumentative; he was not merely *dialektikos* but *eristikos*. Though he considered moderation and just dealing to be goods, and their opposites evils, he had no time for friendship as a concept on the dialectical grounds that in a foolish man it could not exist, and in a wise man it was unnecessary; for the wise man is independent and self-sufficient. He seems, like the Cynics, to have believed in a species of *autarkeia* (independence). Love of one's country was absurd. The wise man is a citizen of the world; this is a Cynic view also, and attributed to both Antisthenes and Diogenes the Cynic. Also he maintained that if it seemed appropriate to the occasion, a person could commit adultery or sacrilege without really doing wrong; for these things were not in themselves blameworthy. Blame was attached to them by reason of ignorance and prejudice, both of which were to be avoided. Sexual promptings could be indulged quite openly. There was nothing wrong, after all, with putting beauty to its proper use.

But his great preoccupation was religion. He could not help attacking it. This propensity cannot have improved his position with the Athenians. When he asked Eurycleides the hierophant a question about the Eleusinian mysteries in which he officiated, he was loftily informed that a hierophant could not divulge anything to an uninitiated person. Theodorus immediately said 'But your function is initiating the uninitiated, that's what you do all the time'. He was banished from Athens. We need hardly be surprised. Another offence he committed against the hypersensitive Athenians was his remark that the Athena of Pheidias, the great cult statue in the Parthenon, was not the child of Zeus, but of Pheidias the sculptor. Also he said she was not a *theos*; and wriggled out of the awkwardness this aroused by saying she was a *thea*. *Theos* was used for 'god' or 'goddess', *thea* specifically for 'goddess'. He would have been charged before the court of the Areopagus if Demetrius of Phalerum had not used his influence to prevent it. Diogenes Laertius reports that Amphicrates, the writer of *Famous Men*, says Theodorus was executed by the Athenians; but this is not likely. Theodorus seems to have inclined towards the Cynics in some of his attitudes; but his rugged independence, impolite dialectic, rejection of relationships and society seem to recall Antisthenes and Diogenes

rather than other Cynics. He did not seem to be completely committed to the hedonism of the Cyrenaic School. He had a close association with Hipparchia, the wife of Crates the Cynic, and very probably was her lover. It seems that he sometimes lived with this couple. He attracted the attention of King Ptolemy, who found him interesting but disturbing company and is said to have sent him on an embassy, being certain, we suppose, that he would satisfactorily insult the ruler to whom he was sent.

Euhemerus

Let us consider briefly Euhemerus (usually classified with the 'Cyrenaics') of whom we know little enough, but who has given the world a particular theory about the origins of the gods, a theory that bears his name to this day. 'Euhemerism' is the name we still give to the opinion that gods have their origins in great men of the prehistoric past, whom the darkness of a remote and mythopoeic age gradually transformed into objects of worship as the tradition of their personalities and achievements passed cloudily from generation to generation. This view was expressed by Euhemerus, whose period of activity seems to have been around 317-297 BC, in his book called *Hiera Anagraphe* (Sacred Inscription), which was translated into Latin by a later admirer, the Roman Poet Ennius. Euhemerus was hardly an atheist, but his theory was certainly radical enough to startle and dismay people of his time. On the other hand, ancient Greek belief included a class of being called heroes or *daimones*, many of whom were supposed to have been living men at one time. Oedipus is in process of becoming such a demigod in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonos*. Aristotle's provincial fellow citizens of Stagira declared him a hero after his death. Alexander the Great became a god: Euhemerus extended and formalised an idea that was already there. In spite of this, his statement of his theory could have caused some amazement and dismay.

Stilpo

Stilpo (a 'Megarian philosopher') had the reputation of being a most inspiring teacher, though his dialogues, none of which are named by Diogenes Laertius, are said to have been lamely written. He died some

time after 307-6 BC, the year in which Megara was captured by Demetrius Poliorcetes. We infer his survival beyond this point because his house is said to have been spared in the sacking of the town by the special command of the general himself. Ptolemy Soter also admired him, and gave him a sum of money which would have been more substantial had not Stilpo himself restricted the amount he was prepared to take. He would not accept Ptolemy's invitation to accompany him to Egypt.

His personal charm and the ingenuity of his teaching enabled him to win over many pupils of other philosophers. He was taught by Megarians himself, possibly even by Euclides, but we cannot be sure. Amongst his better-known students was Menedemus (see below). Diogenes Laertius mentions that in Heraclides' account, Zeno of Citium (335-263 BC), the founder of stoic philosophy, was one of his pupils. Crates the Cynic is also said to have been taught by him. There are a number of amusing anecdotes telling of eristic confrontations between the two of them. Diogenes Laertius retails these, and it would be prudent to suspect they were part of the cynic tradition of anecdotal hagiography rather than accounts of real incidents. Nevertheless, there is nothing intrinsically incredible in them.

Certainly Stilpo was considered to be a very acute dialectician, fiercely eristic. Diodorus, we are told, could not respond effectively to one of his challenges (see below). Although he is usually classed as a Socratic of Megarian persuasion and all Greece is said to have 'Megarised' because of his influence, many of his positions recall cynic philosophy. Diogenes Laertius says he was a precursor of Stoicism, and Stilpo's thought has a blend of Socratic/Megarian and Socratic/cynic attitudes of the kind that provided the generating matrix for the development of Stoicism. However, it would be unfair to single out one individual for this honour. We also need to mention Menedemus' candidature. Most of all we should keep in mind that a philosophy of composite origins like Stoicism, has complex sources and varied ancestry. His influence on Zeno may have been decisive but it can hardly be considered exclusive.

He regarded 'being' as a unity and rejected the separation or division of 'being' involved in predication. Predications, and the subjects of which these predications are made, are different from each other; and different things are separate from each other. If they are separate, the subject cannot be said *to be* the predicate. You cannot say *A* is *x*, or that *A* *x*'s. There is no connection in being between *A* and *x*. It may be that Stilpo went even further and maintained that *A* cannot be

predicated of *A*. If this were so, it would take Stilpo even further along the road of logical austerity than Antisthenes and his friends (see Chapter 12), who, if we believe Aristotle, at least conceded that *A* is *A*.

The suggestion that he may have been moving along an Antisthenian path sympathises with other cynicising features that can be seen in him. His personal life was irregular. He lived openly with a prostitute, Nicerate. His daughter was well known for her promiscuity, and she was the cause of the following typically cynic formulation: 'She no more disgraces me than I bring honour to her'. In short, they both were behaving with understandable 'naturalness' in the conduct of their lives. The old notion of honour, which was enshrined in the Homeric epic's representation of early Greece, is rejected as absurd.

He also found himself in conflict with the Athenians' religious irritability when he commented that the Athene of Pheidias was not the offspring of Zeus, but of Pheidias the sculptor. The same story is told of Theodorus. Probably it is part of cynic hagiographical tradition. Cynics happily made use of eristic puns in order to achieve psychological victory over their opponents. It was not that they believed their own nonsense, but rather that they thought most argument (*logos*) was nonsense.

Another anecdote tells how Stilpo used to be thronged by crowds of Athenians who left their work to see him pass by. When it was suggested that they looked at him as if he were a wild beast on show, he said, 'No, they have come out to look at a real man.' This is reminiscent of Diogenes the Cynic out at midday with a lantern looking for a 'real man'.

Menedemus

Menedemus (an 'Elean' or 'Eretrian' philosopher) was associated first of all with the Elean School, which was founded by Phaedo; Menedemus is said to have removed it to Eretria. He and his associates are referred to as an Eretrian School, but the nomenclature is of no great significance. The biographical tradition connects him with the Megarians, saying that he was a soldier in an Eretrian force sent to Megara, that he defected in order to hear Plato's teaching in Athens, and then subsequently returned to Megara. This story is not very easy to accept for Menedemus died a self-inflicted death in 278 BC, and even if he were of advanced age it is not likely that he would have been taught by Plato who died in 348 BC. Perhaps Diogenes Laertius is confusing him with another earlier Menedemus.

He had a lifelong friendship with Asclepiades, a philosopher of whom we knew scarcely anything apart from the story of his connection with Menedemus. The principal philosophical influence on Menedemus was that of Stilpo who was his teacher. We have accounts of dialectical combat between Alexinos and Menedemus which show the eristic tendencies we have seen in other successors to the Socratic tradition. Antisthenes described him as very combative and eristic in his arguments. Unlike other Socratics, he participated in the political life of his city, Eretria, and is said to have taken steps to protect it from attack by that vigorous and ubiquitous Macedonian potentate, Demetrius Poliorcetes (the besieger). He seems to have maintained friendly relations with the Macedonian overlords, who in succession to Alexander exercised a suzerain power over the Greek cities. When he decided to take his own life, he was resident in Macedonia.

This decision was of a kind unusual, but not unprecedented in the Greek world. Protracted old age unaccompanied by persisting vigour and attended by increasing pain could sometimes quite voluntarily be ended by the sufferer himself. The usual method was a decision not to eat again. Some cities had laws regulating these decisions. The candidate for suicide had to comply with them and obtain permission from the state to make his exit. Cynics, and afterwards Stoics, made self-destruction more fashionable if not more popular. It may be that this last action of Menedemus reflects a persistent cynic strand in his thinking; for in earlier life he was ridiculed as being really a Cynic, not an Elean or Eretrian.

We can make too much of distinctions between these groups of philosophers. It is easy to forget that coincidence in their thought and teaching was almost inevitable; especially since they all, to a greater or lesser degree, inherited the germs of their philosophies from Socrates. Nevertheless, Menedemus' philosophy has points in common with what we could regard as cynic thought. The traits which we could call 'cynic' are the following:

His suicide (which we have already discussed).

His insistence upon the unity of virtue: there is only one good and it is rational.

His preoccupation with ethical problems in his philosophy rather than an investigation of basic reality.

His use of eristic rather than concentration upon logic as an object of study in itself.

His alleged *parrhesia* (outspokenness) and his lack of subservience in

the presence of powerful men (which is not entirely incompatible with his remaining on good terms with the Macedonians. He is supposed to have respected nobody but Stilpo).

His combined household with Asclepiades, which he and his wife, and Asclepiades and his wife ran as a miniature commune. (The two wives, incidentally, were mother and daughter.)

These items all have a distinctly cynic flavour. So too has his logic which, like that of other Socratics, and particularly the Megarians, involves that difficulty we have noted in the use of the verb 'to be' or any expression that suggests 'being': namely that if you say that *A* is *x*, then you are not merely saying that *A* happens to have the characteristic or quality *x* but that *A* is in its very being *x* as well as itself, which involves a contradiction. For how can a thing be itself and something else at the same time? It is the difficulty, as we have seen, that Socrates' successors inherited from Parmenides and Zeno of Elea, the difficulty that comes from the view that expressions involving parts of 'to be' entail existence.

Menedemus is said to have been sufficiently strong on this point to reject the verb 'to be' in any linguistic situation where it links a subject with a predicate, and acts as a joining word as in 'the man is walking'. Apparently Menedemus avoided the Greek equivalent of this last example 'the man is walking', and preferred the equivalent of 'the man walks'. Of course this too is a predication, and it involves just the same difficulty as 'the man is walking'. Aristotle saw that the two forms of expression were really equivalent, but Menedemus had enough of the old Parmenidean virus left in him to make such an insight unacceptable. Probably he thought that if he could avoid using the verb 'to be' in his statements, these would be better formed and more accurate from a logical point of view. Lycophron also attempted to rid himself of the verb 'to be' and its problems by making use of a Greek idiom that allowed this verb to be left out of expression where it would normally be used to join subject and predicate. For instance it is possible in Greek and other languages to have an expression like 'Socrates bald' or 'bald Socrates' that makes the same statement as 'Socrates is bald'. Some authorities took the view that these 'nominal' sentences — they were called 'nominal' because they were made up of nouns and adjectives instead of nouns and verbs — were of an entirely different logical and grammatical species from expressions that contained verbs. However, Lycophron was deluded in thinking that his use of 'nominal sentences' solved his basic problem.

Menedemus apparently also disallowed negative or hypothetical statements. The Eretrian view was that nothing could be predicated of nothing, which may be related to this cautious attitude about negative hypothetical expressions. We shall consider later on Antisthenes' dictum that it is 'impossible to contradict' and Aristotle's interpretation of it as a possible embargo on negatives of all kinds. If Menedemus held views similar to those of Antisthenes and his friends on this question of logic, then we observe one more point in common between the Eretrian philosopher and the Cynics or Protocynics. However, this difficulty with the question of being and not-being was a common inheritance of Cynics, Megarians and the Eretrians, who were to disappear as identifiable groups shortly after the end of the fourth century BC. We need to remember that in spite of this austere view about the logical acceptability of sentences containing the verb 'to be', etc., Menedemus used natural language involving such disapproved items every day of his life. The sphere of logically correct expression was separate for him, as for us, from the sphere of ordinary natural language. Logicised language is and was a scientific norm or standard rather than an everyday utensil.

The Eretrian philosophers are said to have rejected 'qualities' (*poiotetes*) as having no general reality but merely occurring in particulars and composites. That is to say, they objected to such predicates 'A has such and such a characteristic', which answer such questions as : 'what is A like?' In this they may differ somewhat from Aristotle's account of the 'Antisthenians' who are happy enough to say 'A is like x' but will not say 'A is x'.

In one more point Menedemus reminds us of Antisthenes — he is said (like Antisthenes) to have despised Plato. Again, we can say that this is a distinct cynic or cynic-influenced trait, or we can repeat that the Socratics were a blend of variants from one philosophical root inspiration: Socrates' dialectic.

Diodorus

Diodorus of Iasos lived in the late fourth century BC in the time of Ptolemy Soter (c. 307 BC). He may still have been alive in 283 BC, since he is mentioned in an epigram of Callimachus who arrived in Alexandria in 285 BC. His nickname, Kronos, which means 'old timer', is supposed to have been awarded as an insult by King Ptolemy when he failed to respond successfully to an aggressive dialectical sally from

Stilpo. But he may have inherited it from his teacher Apollonius. Tradition says that he was so ashamed at his defeat that he went off, wrote an unsuccessful attempt to refute Stilpo's points, and then committed suicide from a sense of irreparably damaged repute. This has a suggestive resemblance to stories about mythical contestants which tell how the loser decided to take his own life to relieve his sense of shame. Yet he and Stilpo could have had arguments: that was what *dialektike* involved! We have only to remember the atmosphere of contentiousness and the will to win that characterise some of Plato's dialogues.

Diodorus, like Euclides, thought that motion was impossible, a main doctrine of the Eleatic ancients Parmenides and Zeno. He said that an object can be thought of either as in the space in which it is, or the space in which it is not. Now it cannot move in the space in which it is, because it occupies that space fully; nor can it move in the space in which it is not, for that would be absurd. Movement, therefore, is impossible.

Another argument that he used in this connection is the following. For a body to move, the majority of its particles must first move; for the majority of its particles to move, the majority of majority must first move; but a majority of that second majority must move before even this can happen. And so on — to absurdity. This is of course a version of the Sorites puzzle.

We admire the acuteness with which he diverts doctrines derived from the atomistic philosophers to the refutation of the possibility of motion. The 'Atomists' postulated atoms and the void in which they moved in order to provide for motion and change which the Eleatics denied. Diodorus was prudent enough to accept the evidence of his senses on the subject of motion that has already taken place. He allows you to say: 'it has moved', but not 'it is moving'. 'Moving' and 'becoming' are in this context the same thing. His argument of 'the wall' shows this: as long as the stones that compose a wall hold together, you can properly say, 'the wall is'. But when the stones have fallen away from each other, you can only say, 'the wall is not'. You can never say the wall 'is falling down'. He has the practical good sense to admit that things can happen; but the process cannot be perceived or expressed. The result can be spoken of accurately and readily.

His ingenious modifications of the Eleatic positions show how undeservedly he has been saddled with the disobliging anecdote I mentioned earlier. Another analytically clever viewpoint has been attributed to him which enhances his reputation for sharpness of wit.

He maintained that no word was ambiguous. Nobody ever says anything or thinks anything ambiguous, and nothing should seem to be other than that which the speaker understands himself to be saying (Aulus Gellius, 11, 127-3).

'Ambiguous' here means capable of more than one meaning. According to Diodorus, meaning depends on what the speaker intends because his intention has a particular identity that cannot be falsified by the word he uses to express this intention. Nobody, he maintains, says 'two' when he means 'one'.

The argument (or group of arguments) for which Diodorus is most famous was called the 'Master Argument' by its originator himself, because he regarded it as providing an overwhelmingly powerful proof that events in the world are determined rigidly by an unbreakable chain of preemptive causes. The following is the account given of the 'Master Argument' in Arrian's records of the lectures of Epictetus, an ex-slave and distinguished Stoic (with cynicism tendencies) of the first century AD (probably 50-120 AD). The 'Master Argument' seems to have been based on some such premises as these:

Since there is a common incompatibility with each other in the following three statements:

- (1) Every true event in the past is necessary.
- (2) Something possible does not follow from something impossible. [Note the text says simply 'follow', but mere sequence is hardly what it implies. My use of 'follow from' suggests natural implication: q follows from p . We have no reason to think that was intended either. Please regard 'follow from' as occupying an uncompromised position between the two.]
- (3) Something which is not true now and will not be true is nevertheless possible.

Now Diodorus, noting this incompatibility, used the persuasiveness of the first two in order to obtain the conclusion:

- (4) That nothing is possible which is not true and will not be true.

One person will accept this pair: (3) something which is not true now and never will be is nevertheless possible, and, (2) something possible does not follow something impossible; but not that (1) every true event in the past is necessary, as Cleanthes and his associates seem to maintain, with the general agreement of Antipater. Others accept the other two, (3) something which is not true now and never will be true is nevertheless possible, and, (1) every true event in the past is necessary. They will then assert that

an impossible does follow from a possible. It is impossible to accept the three of them together because of their incompatibility.

If somebody asks me 'which of them do you accept?' I shall reply to him that I do not know. I understand from the tradition that Diodorus accepted the first two (1) (2); the School of Panthoides and Cleanthes the next pair (3) (2); and Chrysippus' people the last two (3) (1).

'What is your opinion?' I am asked. I was not born to have an opinion on it at all or to weigh up my personal impression of it or to analyse what has been said about it or to adopt any position on the subject. In this respect I am no better than the grammarian. 'Who was Hector's father?' you ask him. 'Priam.' 'Who were his brothers?' 'Alexander and Deiphobus.' 'Who was their mother?' 'Hecuba.' This is the tradition I have received. 'From whom?' 'Homer.' And Hellenicus I think writes about them and others. It's the same with me and the Master Argument. What more can I say about it? But if I'm conceited, I can impress the company at a party by listing all the writers on the subject. Chrysippus also has written wonderfully about it in the first book of his monograph on *Possibles*. Cleanthes has written a monograph specially devoted to the problem, and so has Archedemus. Antipater has written about it in his book on *Possibles* and also a special treatise in his discussion of the 'Master'. 'Have you read that one?' 'I have not read it.' 'Read it then.' And what good will that be to him, I ask you. What have you got from reading it? Have you found a view? No, you are going to tell us about Helen and Priam and Calypso's isle which never was nor will be. (Epictetus, 2. 19. 1)

Our knowledge of the 'Master Argument' is indirect. Arrian's notes were taken down in shorthand and can be considered reasonably reliable. Arrian was a notable historian, and the difference between his own style and that which characterises his records of Epictetus' teaching is very marked. So we can be reasonably sure that he is conveying to us a genuine impression of the original.

Epictetus' account of the 'Master Argument' does not occur in a lecture about logic, but in a more general discussion in which he satirically criticises people who study philosophy in order to impress others. The 'Master Argument' was a favourite theme with name-dropping frauds, and Epictetus has introduced it to illustrate their follies. We need not therefore expect his account of it to be logically strict. It is probably an outline in general terms. Further, as you see from the last

paragraph of the quotation from his text, he is making great play of his own inability (or professed inability) to understand it.

We need not be surprised at the difficulty which modern interpreters have experienced in their attempts to explain it. Some have simply failed to see any logical relationship at all, let alone strict incompatibility between the three statements. They have resigned themselves to the fact that we do not have the whole story and that thus there is little point in trying to reconstruct it on the basis of unknowns. For example, there is no certainty about the meaning of 'necessary' (1). It can hardly mean logical necessity, for that need have no reference to the past. Logical necessity would be involved if we say *s* is necessarily *t*, in that if *s* were not *t*, a contradiction would occur. That does not seem to be what is meant. Nor can 'follow from' mean what logicians call material implication. For instance, if *p* then *q*. If *p* is 'possible' then *q* 'possible' would be valid sense only if the material implication 'if *p* then *q*' is true. (There are other problems which we need not go into here, but if you wish to pursue the matter further, see Purlil, 1973; Prior, 1955; Sorabji, 1980; Sedley, 1980.) Others see the problems in terms of propositional logic of the kind developed by the Stoics (Mates, 1952) which at first sight is not unreasonable, since we find the problem of the 'Master Argument' stated for us in Stoic text.

In spite of the difficulties arising from the manner in which the 'Master Argument' has been transmitted to us, we should bear in mind (a) that it must have meant something to Epictetus' hearers, even in his somewhat easygoing summary, and (b) that it was regarded as very difficult even in Epictetus' time.

All of its elements have their roots in Aristotle and can be found expressed in his works. This does not mean that Diodorus meant precisely what Aristotle meant by them, merely that he saw fit to use them for his own purpose.

Looking at (1), 'every true event in the past is necessary', we may think of an historical incident which having happened cannot be undone and so when we speak of it now, or tomorrow, or when somebody speaks of it in a hundred years time, it will still be true. It cannot be made untrue. There is a time element involved here and in the other portions of the argument; a time element which is linked to 'cause' and works with it. This time element, which can be seen in Diodorus' other arguments, is essential to any kind of understanding of the problem. We are not dealing with timeless logic.

Looking then at (2), 'something possible does not follow from something impossible'; for something to be possible, that is to have the capacity

to happen, it needs certain preconditions. There is a linkage between what may happen and what has been or is now true. This is not made explicit, but it is understood. If a man says that in ten years time he will be 40, this will not be possible unless the precondition of his having been born thirty years ago is true. If he was born twenty years ago, his being 40 in ten years is impossible. If we recognise the importance of this time element in the relationship between events, the statement becomes clearer.

If we look at (1) and (2) in this light, we can see that, taken together, they make a strong combination of arguments in favour of (4): 'nothing is possible which is not true and will not be true'. What they amount to is this: antecedent events upon which subsequent events depend are necessary. Once they are true they remain true, and it is only from these that further events can emerge. Thus (3), exemplified by Aristotle's image of the coat that is not cut and will not be cut but is yet cuttable, is a blind alley. Determinism, of a kind, wins.

If we leave aside (1), (3) and (2) are compatible enough; (3) defines the possible in 'coat' terms, (2) merely confirms that the possible follows from the possible. There is nothing wrong with that. Nor is there any conflict between (3) and (1). They do not have any obvious connection, but they are not incompatible. We may ask ourselves why (3) was included at all if it was simply Diodorus' wish to press a species of determinism. I do not know the answer. I suppose, however, that by including a statement of the possibility which he wanted to refute and presenting a possible two out of three options, he was under the impression he was proving his point more thoroughly.

That the future is in many ways determined by the past is an important Stoic belief. Introducing this Stoic assumption into our discussion of the 'Master Argument' helps us towards a provisional understanding of it. I think we would do well, however, to remember Diodorus' Eleatically influenced attitude to change as it is exemplified in his arguments about change and motion. Although he rejects change and motion as such, he accepts the results: at one time a wall is standing, its stones in place. Next time it is disintegrated. No intermediate stage is allowable. Similar is the problem of an object moving from the space it occupies to another. How many particles have to have completed their transfer before you can say the object has moved? The second stage is accepted, but the process is disallowed. Thus the second stage; 'disintegrated wall', 'moved object', is not merely preconditioned by the first. It is continuous with it. There is no perceptible break between the first and second stage. There could be no second stage without the first. Determinism rules.

Philo

Philo (a 'Megarian philosopher') was an assiduous pupil of Diodorus and, in the Megarian fashion, an expert practitioner of dialectical subtleties. His books on *tropoi* (forms of argument) and *peri semasion* (on meanings) were thought worthy of attack by the Stoic Chrysippus. He is attributed with views that seem to comment on some of Diodorus' preoccupations. According to Philo, everything is possible even if it is inhibited by external circumstances from actually taking place. This is, if it is rightly reported, a somewhat more radical or probably a clearer version of the statement of the third element in the 'Master Argument'. The possibility of a thing being realised resides in itself, not its circumstances. A piece of wood in the ocean is still to be considered combustible, though it will not be burned, indeed probably never will be burned. 'Suitability' or 'fitness' is the sole criterion of whether a thing is possible (Mates, 1952, p. 40). This is a refined concept of possibility and it goes beyond that of Aristotle who held that the possible is that which can happen if it is not prevented (even if it does not happen). Philo's notion of 'possibility' would hardly be likely to conflict with a determinist view of events which the 'Master Argument's' first two elements may have been used to support. Whether a thing happens or not is simply determined, he thinks, by the operation or non-operation of external forces.

In so far as the Megarians were interested in 'being', 'not being', implications (conditional sentences, etc.) they were interested in the prime material of logic. We can see how a development of these interests leads to stoic logic with its formalisation of language into different classes of *lekta* (things said) and the operation upon the properties into which *lekta* were made of negation, implication, conjunction — such things as we would call logical functions or functors in modern logic. Although it is clear that a Megarian like Diodorus was interested in conditional expressions and implications, there is no need to attribute to him the whole apparatus of stoic logic. Without him, and without Aristotle, stoic logic could not have been developed as an important formal system: but he was more concerned, like the Megarians and Socratics in general, with the reality that words and propositions sought to express than the science of using propositions. I would therefore disagree with attempts to see the three portions of the 'Master Argument' as propositional functions rather than statements that seek to trap realities. I believe that the view of the Megarians as primarily logicians has a distorted perspective. Even

when Epictetus much later in time gives his significantly informal synopsis of the 'Master Argument', he speaks of 'something that is true and in the past is necessary': he does not say 'a proposition about the past that is true is necessary'. The difference in emphasis is not trivial. It reveals an attitude of some importance. Epictetus, brilliant dialectician though he was, was not concerned so much with logical expression of the reality in language, but with the reality that the language tries to express. This is true of the Stoics themselves, as it was true of Aristotle. Strictly speaking, there were no professional logicians in antiquity. As a specialism, it is relatively modern.

Diodorus was a distinguished thinker. It is not easy to see that the old-style dialectical approach to philosophy could have been carried much further. A change was to come in which Zeno of Citium (not Elea!) and his successors joined elements of cynic thought in a new configuration with natural science which is known to history as Stoicism. Diodorus was by no means the equal of Aristotle, his older contemporary, but he was no mediocre thinker. In Chapter 13 I shall consider another strand of the Socratic succession, Cynicism. In Chapter 12 Antisthenes will be considered, for he is the prime mover, if not the founder, of Cynicism. This pupil of Socrates and Gorgias adapted his Socratic inheritance to a different, but in the long run more influential, purpose; and cynic philosophy survived with Stoicism and Epicureanism when the Megaric and other 'Socratic' groupings were a mere memory.

12 ANTISTHENES

Antisthenes could be discussed with equal propriety in the chapters on the Sophists (Chapters 2 and 3) or Chapter 11, which considers the Socratic philosophers. He had characteristics of both of these groups. From the Sophists, especially Gorgias, came his interest in rhetoric, literature and style. Antisthenes was Socratic in his austerity of attitude, his liking for dialectic, his restrictive logic and his preoccupation with a stricter conception of *arete* than that which the Sophists offered to teach. He was a devoted adherent of Socrates. He was a copious writer whose works dealt with many philosophical questions. Unfortunately, we possess only fragments of the great quantity that he wrote.

In discussing Antisthenes I shall refer to statements about him from ancient authorities without quotation or reference. Many of these references are brief and of passing significance in the context where they occur. Allow me to recommend F. Caizzi (1966), Diogenes Laertius (Loeb edition, London, 1925), L. Paquet (1975) and D. R. Dudley (1937) for detailed information about the sources.

This curious and attractively individualistic person was the child of an Athenian father and a foreign mother. We can date his life span approximately from 336 to 366 BC. By the terms of Pericles' legislation of 451 BC he was not allowed Athenian citizenship because one of his parents was of non-Athenian origin. Yet he was obliged to fight in Athens' armies in the Peloponnesian war, and may have at least obtained the reward of citizenship for his military services. His mother was Thracian: he is said to have made defensive jokes on this topic about Orpheus being Thracian; also, he remembered that the Great Mother of all the gods was non-Greek. He sneered at Athenian pretences at being born of the soil of their country, its aboriginal inhabitants; he said that snails could claim to be equally autochthonous. He took part in the battle of Tanagra, 424 BC, in which he acted with distinction. No man who was Athenian on both parental sides, he jibed, could have performed with such courage (Diogenes Laertius 6.1).

The bitterness that prompted these jokes, which may be part of an authentic tradition, sounds sincere. He spent much of his time at Cynosarges outside Athens, at a gymnasium which was frequented by people who were of imperfectly Athenian status. Here he is said to have

begun to teach, and it has been thought that the name of the cynic philosophy came from Cynosarges which seems to mean 'the place of the white dog'. This opinion is scarcely held at all now; the characteristics of dog nature that the Cynics admired and imitated are more properly regarded as providing the philosophical movement with its name. Some ancient authorities designate Antisthenes as the first Cynic and the founder of the cynic philosophy. The cynic movement is so loose in texture that it would be difficult to exclude Antisthenes from connections with it. Nevertheless, it is chronologically doubtful whether Diogenes, the first clearly defined 'Cynic' could have been taught by him. Also, his personal characteristics, which included a touch of old-fashioned strictness in his attitude to such matters as incest (which Diogenes professed to consider harmless) estranges him from the cynic tradition as such. Cicero describes him as a man of acute mind rather than a deep scholar. Xenophon's portrait of him in his *Symposium* shows him as slightly awkward, but not ill natured. He did not occupy himself with material things: he did not need to, since his father left him sufficient money and he never was really poor. In this he was unlike the Cynics who were fond of professing poverty and in some cases were genuinely poor.

Though Antisthenes was a reasonably wealthy man, he preferred a simple life and disliked greed and materialism. Xenophon describes him in his *Symposium* as not luxurious, content with little, having none of that acquisitive instinct which he links with tyrants who in turn are causes of the destruction of families and whole cities. In matters of sex, if relief were required, he advocated recourse to unattractive women that nobody else would look at. These, he argued, would be appreciative and welcoming. His only glory in his possessions was that if he were to be robbed of everything he possessed, he would regard no menial job as unacceptable if it provided him with a subsistence (Xen. *Symp.* 4, 35-40). Like Socrates, he embraced a kind of poverty but was not poor by birth.

He was austere in his admiration of *ponos* (hardship, toil). Toil is connected with arete in Prodicus' *Horai*, and Xenophon has told us of Antisthenes' association with Prodicus (see Chapter 3). Pleasure seemed dangerous to him. He would 'rather be mad than be happy' and he held in an extreme form the typical Greek opinion that sexual love (*eros*) was a disease (*nosos*). He remarked that if he could catch Aphrodite, the goddess of sexual love, he would shoot her, presumably with her son's arrows. Antisthenes revered Heracles as a hero who pursued arete through *ponos*. Heracles, like Antisthenes, was not of regular parentage.

Figures like Odysseus, who also endured much, he regarded with admiring sympathy. In a pair of set speeches, one purporting to be of Ajax, the other of Odysseus, Antisthenes gives advantage to Odysseus in the great quarrel between them that arose from the award of Achilles' armour to Odysseus. This interesting pair of sophistic orations may be authentic compositions of Antisthenes.

We know the names of some writings of Antisthenes that were concerned with political and social life, but we have almost no information about their contents. Like Plato, he tended to dislike the great men of politics, like Pericles, whom he criticises for his loose moral character. One of Antisthenes' works, the *Politicus*, seems to have an account of various demagogues (*Athenaeus* 220d) which may parallel in some respects Plato's description in the *Republic* of various types of political man, the oligarch, the timocrat, the democrat and the *tyrannos*. Antisthenes seemed to regard men and women as capable of arete to the same degree. This is another parallel with the *Republic*, but it would be rash to attribute to Antisthenes the view that women were in every respect equal to men. *On the Procreation of Children and on Marriage* is a title which suggests eugenics: Antisthenes suggested in this work that only the wise man — the *sophos* or philosopher — can discern the quality of the gifted woman who will produce the best offspring (*Diogenes Laertius* 6.11) Again we may recall the *Republic's* marital arrangements. Against this, we note that he is said to have raised no objection to people obtaining casual relief of their sexual desires; also that a man should make love only to a woman who appreciates it.

His views of politics seem to be summed up in the saying attributed to him that politics is like fire: one is most comfortable when neither too far from it nor too close. Remember that this man was a friend of Socrates and was with him even on his last day. Individuality and self-sufficiency were Antisthenes' prime aims, not integration in the close life of the city state. Recall, also, that he was Athenian only on his father's side, and thus excluded from citizenship. He seems to have obtained his citizenship at last; but we can suppose it was hard won. He despised democracy's assumption that you could legislate goodness; he accused the Athenians of voting that asses were horses. But he used the democratic law courts to pursue Anytus and Meletus, Socrates' accusers, and his prosecution of them was successful. Democratic politicians were 'sneaks and buffoons' (both ideas are included in the Greek word *kolax* which he used of them). 'Better be thrown to the crows than the sneaks': this saying sounds better in Greek: *meizon es korakas e es kolakas*. Sparta was, for him, a species of ideal state: it

was the abode of men, unlike Athens which he compared to a woman's drawing room. It has been argued that the *Constitution of Sparta*, a pamphlet often attributed to Xenophon, was composed by Antisthenes (Chrimes, 1948). He wrote a *politeia* (a 'Republic') but we do not know what it contained. Perhaps he put forward utopist suggestions for the reorganisation of society after the fashion of Plato's *Republic* (*politeia*) or the ideas somewhat resembling those that we have seen attributed to him. If his *politeia* was a specifically descriptive work like the surviving *Constitution of Sparta*, it would probably have been titled in just such a precise manner instead of being called merely *politeia*. Possibly it was designed to mock or refute the Platonic *politeia*.

In Plato's *Republic* there is an element of playfulness which is sometimes overlooked (Ardley, 1967). Plato's use of metaphor from drama and such words as *paizein* (to play) can be over-interpreted; but it should not be ignored (Rankin, 1979). The *Republic* repeats many themes of Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusai*, which was produced in 392 BC. The *Republic* itself was composed certainly some time later than this. Aristoxenus suggested that much of Plato's *Republic* was to be found in Protagoras' *Antilogika*. Perhaps both Aristophanes and Plato drew upon this lost work. Both works roughly agree that (1) property, to a greater or lesser extent, should be nationalised, (2) sexual customs should be changed so that the traditional *oikos* (household) ceased to predominate, and the established marital restraints on sexual intercourse should be abolished: that children should regard all adults as parents. In *Ecclesiazusai* women have taken over power in the state and these reforms are enacted. They are determined that sex no longer shall be a kind of commodity as it is in the traditional household system of society.

There is an element of 'Laconism' (the influence of Lacedaemonian or Spartan customs) in both the comedy and Plato's *Republic*. A work which arguably had such a tendency — given Plato's nervousness about Athenian hostility to philosophers — perhaps needed to contain a playful element and describe a situation sufficiently remote from everyday life.

Antisthenes also disliked the idea of sex as a commodity in the customary marriage market. We have already noted his views on the subject. It is not easy to believe that Antisthenes, who placed so much importance upon personal independence and self sufficiency (*autarkeia*), would readily prove to be the author of a *politeia* that restricted individual human freedom in the interests of the whole. Yet such a paradox is not impossible when we consider the example of George

Bernard Shaw, a vivid individualist who advocated collectivism. Antisthenes approved many aspects of Spartan society, and one unequivocal purpose in Sparta's social organisation was the preservation intact of the constitution that guaranteed it. We must remain in substantial ignorance of Antisthenes' political prescription, if that indeed was the concern of his politeia. Still, we may have hints about it in the fragments of his *Cyrus* which, like Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, seems to have been dedicated to moral and ethical topics brought together in the portrait of a great barbarian king and the founder of an empire. Like his book on Heracles, Antisthenes' *Cyrus* was concerned with a shining example of individual virtue. One or two revealing quotations become almost proverbial: 'the most kingly characteristic is to act well and have a bad repute', i.e. to do what is right irrespective of popularity. This occurs both in Arrian (*Epictetus*) 4.6.20 and in Marcus Aurelius 7.36. Another epigrammatic sentence from this work is that 'the most necessary piece of learning is to unlearn vices'. In the second book of his *Cyrus or on Kingship* Antisthenes grasps the opportunities of ridiculing Alcibiades for womanising and incest; the latter habit resembled, he said, the established custom of the Persian nobility. He lets slip few occasions of attacking Pericles, Alcibiades or anybody connected with that family as the fragments of his *Aspasia* (Pericles' mistress) also show.

Antisthenes was recognised in the fourth century BC as being something more than a randomly cantankerous Sophist. Aristotle refers to him and his associates in two passages of the *Metaphysics* which we shall consider. Antisthenes was important enough to mention, even if no compliment was involved. He was considered to have philosophical associates, though Aristotle may simply mean those Socratics who, in general, have restrictively awkward notions about the nature of 'being'.

Therefore Antisthenes was simplistic in thinking that no *logos* can be said [predicated] of anything [any subject] except that [particular] *logos* which relates to it in a one/one relationship. [The word for related that Aristotle uses here is '*oikeios*' which conveys the idea of family relationship.] It followed from this position that it was impossible to say that a thing was not [*me einai antilegein*] and that it was nearly impossible to make a false statement at all. (Ar. *Met.* 1024b, 32-4)

This passage belongs to a context in which Aristotle is discussing truth and falsity. Falsity involves non-fact, something that does not

exist or cannot be integrated in a true statement. Also false are things which appear to be that which in reality they are not: things seen or comprehended in dreams, for instance, and in fantasies. These are real in the sense that they are 'something'; but they are not what they seem to be. A *logos* also, according to Aristotle, is false when it states what is not. It represents something to be true which 'is not'. Every *logos* is untrue of everything other than the thing in respect of which it is true; the *logos* of a circle is untrue of a triangle (1024b, 27). *Logos* defines what the thing is. More than one defining *logos* about the thing is admissible; for example 'Socrates' and 'Cultured Socrates' can both be said of the same person.

In the passage from this context which we have quoted (*Ar. Met.* 1024b, 32-4), Aristotle uses Antisthenes as an example of the kind of thinking that does not allow more than one very simple *logos* (statement or predication) to be made about anything. The only really valid *logos* according to Antisthenes is: *A is A*. You cannot, according to him, say that *A* is not *A*, or that *A* is *B*. That is not a one/one predicate. So the axiom *ouk estin antilegein* applies here. (Note: a different negative, no different in meaning in this context, occurs in the indirect speech of Aristotle's text: *me estin antilegein*) It is impossible to contradict, to negate, to say anything other of *A* than that it is *A*. The only logically safe predicate of a thing is its own name, for as we shall see, Antisthenes deplores extended and complicated definitive *logoi*. The saying 'ouk estin antilegein' is associated with Antisthenes elsewhere in Aristotle's text (*Topics* 104b 20). We have met it before in Protagoras' repertory of dialectic. It occurs, of course, in Plato's *Euthydemus* 286b c, where Socrates describes it as being self-contradictory. In *Cratylus* 429d ff and *Sophist* 251c its theme emerges again. The latter passage has often been thought to contain an insult directed at Antisthenes. It may also have been used by Prodicus (Binder and Liesenborghs, 1966). In the relativistic world of the Sophists it is impossible to contradict, because each person's point of view is valid for that person and consequently unchallengeable. From that kind of 'contradiction', which presupposes an eristic or antilogical situation, there has been a subtle shift to an idea approaching that of logical contradiction. For logical contradiction is impossible if all that can be said of 'what is' is that 'it is'. Aristotle does not agree with this position, which is based upon a failure to distinguish between what is 'true' and what is 'real', that is to say, 'what is logically correct' from 'what exists'. He has in mind the failure to make this distinction when he says that his 'ouk/me estin antilegein' make it 'nearly impos-

sible to make a false statement'. 'Ouk estin antilegein' is an eruption of the Eleatic attitude which rejects any other statement than 'it is'.

Diogenes Laertius tells the story that Plato mocked Antisthenes for his interest in this 'antilegein' principle, and as a result Antisthenes wrote his attack on Plato: *Sathon e peri tou antilegein* ('Stinker' (a rude play on 'Plato') or *On Contradiction*). In an attack on Plato's Theory of Forms, which Antisthenes insulted as 'naked concepts' (*psilai ennoiai*) the 'antilegein' saying is very useful. It severely restricts predication to the *A* is *A* type. And Plato's Theory requires predications such as *A* is participant in *F A* or *F x* or whatever the (F)orm may be. 'I can see a horse,' Antisthenes is also reputed to have said to Plato 'but I cannot see horseness' (i.e. Form of horse). If all he wanted to accomplish was to refute Plato's Theory of Forms, he needed to do no more than maintain that it was impossible to make a false statement or contradiction. In itself this would confirm a state of relativism in which Forms could not be isolated in truth — or reality — value, and given a place superior to other things that can be spoken of. If he asserted that the only acceptable relationship between subject and predicate is one/one, Antisthenes killed off the possibility of Forms entirely. The essence of Plato's Theory is that subjects and predicates, though both represent realities, can be on different levels of reality: '*A* is green' does not mean *A* is coextensive with 'greenness' or that *A* and 'greenness' are kindred; but that *A* has a share in the being of 'greenness'.

Antisthenes' extreme simplification of the valid uses of logoi does not mean that he rejected the reality of the various objects in the world which could be possible subjects of the *A*-is-*A* type of logos. It means that he had a liking for compressed and economical thought in the area of 'logic'. In his view of the gods we can see something similar. There are many gods of popular belief, he said, but only one in nature. This kind of economy is Socratic in flavour. Socrates was extremely cautious about admitting knowledge: as we have seen, he preferred to proclaim his ignorance, and his 'philosophy' was restricted to a very few tenets. Similarly when Antisthenes says 'nothing is good or bad by nature' he is not likely to be impugning the reality of 'good' or 'bad'. He is probably attacking Plato's Forms once more, for the Forms were 'in' or 'by' nature (*physei*).

Consequently the associates of Antisthenes [*Antistheneioi*] and other unsophisticated persons encountered a difficulty which has a certain appropriateness here: they thought it was impossible to define 'what a thing is', because definition involved an [unduly]

long logos [*makros logos*]; however, it was possible (in their view) to express what a thing 'is like'; for instance, we cannot define what silver 'is', but we can say what it is like, namely, 'tin'. (Ar. *Met.* 1043b 23-8)

Obviously an extended logos aggregating predicate upon predicate leads to no helpful expression of what the thing to be defined really is. Most of us would agree that brevity in such matters is desirable; but we should probably also concede that it was not always attainable. Antisthenes' restricted logic forbade us taking definition further than *A* is *A*, the predication of the subject's name of the subject is all that he thinks is allowable in strict logic. It is the study of names that is the first principle of understanding, he is supposed to have said; but we remain uncertain what he meant by this, or what relationship he envisaged between name and thing named (for an interesting discussion of this see Guthrie, 1969, p. 214). Singleness and simplicity, the trait we encounter in Eleatic 'metaphysics', were prime objectives of his philosophy.

This passage from the *Metaphysics* comes from a discussion whether the *ousia*, the being/substance of synthetic and perishable objects, can be separated from instances of these objects. Aristotle takes the view that you can have a definition of complex or synthetic objects but not of simple objects: definition involves predication and the predicate has to be partly of the material and partly of the form (*eidos*) (not to be confused with Plato's 'Forms') of the subject. So it would be difficult to have a logos of a 'simple'. A 'simple' is too '*simple*' to define in these terms.

His use of the Antisthenean example here is sympathetic in spite of the disparaging attribute 'unsophisticated'. We already know from 1024b that Antisthenes' notion of a defining logos was intimidatingly restricted. Here the restriction seems to be presented as a merit. But Aristotle gives us a further piece of information, namely that the Antistheneans, and presumably their patron, were prepared to admit 'likeness' predicates as sayable and possibly helpful. If this is so, then at this point Antisthenes opens the door to natural language and gives it a status, as indeed he must, and all philosophers must, if they are to build their own 'unnatural' languages out of its tissue; and there is no other resource suitable for the purpose. A physicist may think that reality consists of quanta of energy, but he still uses natural language about the non-technical aspects of his life. And he uses natural language in conversation about science as a metaphor of realities that can be

expressed only in the language of mathematics. Antisthenes' concession that you can say what a thing is like, rather than what it is, is by implication to admit a use of the verb 'to be' which is not committed to expressing reality and existence and which therefore can be regarded as in some sense a 'copula'. But this was not a serious modification of his basic tenet about the impossibility of contradiction. I think Antisthenes accepted that the mind was free to work upon its *phantasiai*, its impressions or comprehensions. The Stoics were to attach great importance to such impressions and regarded them as veridical. A *phantasia* was a mixture of sense data and the intellectual apprehension of these. According to Antisthenes, one of the few things that we actually possess (as distinct from property, relatives, kindred, friends, repute, none of which we really have) is the *use of our impressions* (*Epictetus* 3. 2. 67 ff). Probably it is by *phantasiai* that we are informed about the world and its contacts. Perhaps our 'use' of *phantasiai* enables us to make the kind of 'likeness' predication that is mentioned in *Metaphysics* 1043b. If this were so, it would help to explain how Antisthenes reconciled the ordinary and informal use of natural language with the narrowness of his propositional 'logic' exemplified in *A is A*.

Antisthenes could not be described as a philosopher of first importance in the history of Western thought, but he was a genuine philosopher with his own austere and restricted, but in some sense original logic and ontology, which with his sceptical attitude to the ordinary assumptions along which people conducted their lives, preserved the spirit of Socratic 'ignorance'. Although he was perceptibly influenced by Gorgias and probably by Prodicus, he was more than anything else a Socratic.

We can scarcely call him a Cynic. Aristotle, we remember, speaks of his adherents as '*Antistheneioi*', not Cynics. With the Cynics the idea of nature as a standard for the conduct of human life took a more extreme direction. The natural ways of the dog became models of behaviour. The Sophists regarded instinctual promptings in the individual human being as having a more original and valid authenticity than the agreed rules of civilisation. Various phases of this theme are worked out in Plato's *Gorgias* and in the early books of the *Republic*. Antiphon also regarded nature as having priority over law. Plato's *Republic* attempts to reconcile the two by proposing a social organisation that embodies natural principles.

The 'animal analogy' that Socrates introduces in the *Republic* to provide a model for the breeding and conditions of this society's rulers

and guardians is yet another development of this theme. Animals act in accord with their nature, but their nature can be trained so that it is socially useful without becoming denaturalised. The dog is the ideal public servant: it is a philosophically inclined creature anxious for knowledge, watchful, brave, a protector of the flocks and herds (Rankin, 1965, pp. 418-20). Plato regarded the rulers and protectors of his city as courageous dogs who look after the human, bipedal flock (Sinclair, 1948, pp. 61-2). Plato emphasises watchfulness as the most important characteristic of the dog. Perhaps he knows that Anubis, the Egyptian dog deity, is the guard of the dead (Herodotus 2. 67). However, there is no need to introduce such foreign influence. Dog attributes and association with dogs were sufficiently marks of honour in the Greek classical period for the word for dog (*kyon*) to become embodied in personal names. Kyno is the Greek version of the Median *Spako* (shepherdess) (Herodotus 1. 100); Kynos was the name of a demigod; Kynageiros was Aeschylus' brother, who was killed at the battle of Marathon. Cynarion, on the other hand, was the name of a foreign prostitute resident in Athens, and the name emphasises another aspect of dog-quality, which is absence of shame. This side of the dog's portrait is the one which gives Cynicism its name. It is the dog-philosophy: Cynics regarded such notions as shame and reticence as artificial. All nature's functions could be performed in public, in accord with canine custom. This view of nature rejects the artificial conventionalism and restraint of the *nomos*. Antisthenes is supposed to have been regarded as *Haplocyon* (Absolute Dog) because he gratified his instincts in an unrestrained and public fashion (Diogenes Laertius 6. 13). This is not enough to appoint Antisthenes founder of the cynic movement; but there can be little doubt that he was its inspiring genius. Diogenes, not Antisthenes, was the first Cynic.

13 DIOGENES AND THE CYNICS

Diogenes' name is almost identical with that of Cynicism. With him began the formulated version of the cynic way of life with its values: *apatheia*, indifference to hardship and suffering (one's own in particular); *autarkeia*, self-sufficiency, rejection of a share in society's responsibilities; *parrhesia*, open blunt freedom of speech on all topics; *anaideia*, lack of shame in the performance of all bodily actions, and rejection of that time-honoured heroic Greek concept of personal honour which came down from Archaic times and found its most striking exemplification in Achilles. He believed in hard striving and in *arete* which may be attained by means of it.

The name of this great anti-hero remains universally familiar, but his thought is known to us through the testimony of authors much later than his lifetime. The values which he advocated had been understood and discussed separately by others before him. It was Diogenes who assembled them into a pattern of living, an *askesis*. The cynic movement or school was a way of life rather than a body of philosophic doctrine. His philosophy was that of the animal dog who behaves in accordance with *physis* not *nomos*. And, as we shall see in our review of several of these Cynics, Cynicism admitted wide variations.

We may have no evidence of him that comes from his own life time or near it; but we have a tradition so manifold and interesting in later authors such as Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, Dio Chrysostom, Epictetus, Stobaeus and others, that it is impossible to believe that we are unable to grasp something of his life, work and character. Some elements in the tradition, for example the story of his being sold into slavery (the *praxis* of Diogenes) are hagiographical inventions. It has been said that in the case of Diogenes the legend is more important than the reality (Finley, 1968, p. 89); but the legend is a vector of reality and from the underwood of strange, amusing anecdote some impressive trees stand in proof of his fame in his life time. Theophrastus is said to have collected material about him; also Metrocles, of whom we shall speak later in this chapter. Philodemus, the Epicurean philosopher of Cicero's time, mentioned him in his book on the Stoics. The emperor Julian (fourth century AD) who tried to reverse the Christianisation of the Roman empire studied his writings and questioned the authenticity of some of his tragedies (*Against the Cynics* 186c).

Before we discuss his writings and his teaching, we shall consider what information we have about his life. We know, in hard terms, relatively little. He was from Sinope on the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor. Hikesias, his father, seems to have been a magistrate with some responsibility for public finance in that city, and to have been exiled because of some misdemeanor or mistake which is described as debasing the currency, *paracharattein to nomisma*. Diogenes also was exiled for his involvement. Evidence from coins of Sinope suggests that Hikesias was in office after 362 BC. If this is so, it is impossible to suppose his offence was committed before 360 BC. A problem arises from this. Diogenes Laertius says that Antisthenes taught Diogenes, and there are anecdotes which describe how he drove this persistent applicant for tuition away with his stick until he was overcome by his determination, which was equal to his own, and accepted him as a pupil. If this tradition is correct, it would mean that Antisthenes was alive after 360 BC or else that Diogenes' exile took place before his father, the erring finance official, is recorded to be in office. Perhaps Antisthenes did have a life even longer than is generally supposed. Or else Diogenes visited Athens and was taught by Antisthenes some years before his father's tenure of office and the incident or incidents that led to his father's exile. Diogenes' philosophy bears marks of Antisthenes' influence. It is difficult to reject completely the possibility that he knew Antisthenes in person, though certainly either way is impossible.

Diogenes took as his motto the monetary phrase '*paracharattein to nomisma*'. Literally the words mean 'altering the imprint' on the currency, but the general meaning is pejorative rather than favourable. There is evidence that Sinope's currency was altered about this time, and however deeply Diogenes and his father were involved in the process, the phrase turned out to be a happy philosophical metaphor. For the word *nomisma* usually meaning 'coinage' (in the sense of that which is generally 'accepted' or 'regarded'; *nomizo*) is closely connected with *nomos*, 'law', or that which is generally accepted as a rule of behaviour.

Diogenes followed Antisthenes and other Socratics in regarding physis as a more true and valid basis for the conduct of life than *nomos*, but he did not simply disregard *nomos*. The city and its institutions retained considerable usefulness in some ways, and it was better to change the *nomos* rather than discard it entirely. He intended to bring it down from its artificial peak of value and make it more natural.

Diogenes opposed the meliorist and progressivist theories of thinkers like Protagoras. He interpreted the hypothesis of primitive man's

increasing grasp of his environment by means of his superior intelligence as the beginning of a journey towards vice and decadence, not towards civilised social organisation.

Human beings came together to live in city states so that they would not be molested by external enemies. But in these states they committed such dreadful deeds that they might have deliberately established cities for precisely this purpose. Consequently he took the view that in the myth Zeus punished Prometheus for the discovery of fire and the communication of this discovery because this was the foundation cause of soft and luxurious living. For Zeus did not hate mankind nor did he begrudge them anything that was good. (Dio Chrysostom 6. 205)

He opposed the (Protagorean) argument that human beings could not live like other animals because of the softness of their bodies and because they were naked and were protected neither by fur nor by wings nor a tough hide. He quoted against this the example of frogs and many other creatures which were of much softer constitution than man and yet lived quite satisfactorily. All animals were endowed with the equipment for survival. Otherwise how could primitive man have survived without fire, shelter, clothing or any other means of sustenance than that which was spontaneously available? All the advances of civilisation and technology had been put to bad use. Humanity had applied its intelligence to pleasure and not to the promotion of better moral qualities and justice. Prometheus was the originator of this depraved civilisation and justly deserved to be tied to a rock and have his liver gnawed by an eagle (Dio Chrysostom 6. 207, paraphrased).

Perhaps these arguments find a place in Diogenes' *Politeia*. This work, like Plato's *Politeia* (or as we more familiarly know it, the *Republic*) outlined a constitution of society that was philosophically preferable to the actual constitution. Diogenes advocated that currency should be 'bones' rather than precious metal: presumably he had experienced sufficient difficulty with the metal variety. He followed Plato in recommending that women are to be communal, not the individual possessions of one man. He suggests also that children were to be regarded as the offspring in common of all the inhabitants. Women were to have the same clothes as men, should exercise nude in public as men were accustomed to do. This Spartanism in Diogenes' Utopia is not nourished by intellectual pursuits like those proposed for leading citizens of the city projected in Plato's *Republic*. Diogenes

had no patience with music, astronomy, geometry or dialectic. This negative programme looks like a conscious rejection of some of Plato's favourite educational topics. Certainly it is a blow struck for anti-intellectualism.

Diogenes took Heracles, the exemplar of *ponos* and *arete* as a model and patron of his philosophy. In this he seems to have followed Antisthenes. In addition to his *Politeia*, he wrote *Peri Aretes* (On Virtue), *On the Athenian Constitution*, *On Death*, *On Wealth*. His *Erotikos* (Man in Love?) could have been a satirical successor to Plato's *Symposium*. The works which have personal names as their title (e.g. *Theodorus*) probably follow in the tradition of the *Sokratikos Logos*. One of them, *Pordalos* (Mr Flatulent), sounds like scurrility. Can we guess that, like Antisthenes' *Sathon*, it had Plato or Platonists as its target? A long list of his attributed writings is recorded by Diogenes Laertius (6. 80).

According to an anecdote, Plato is said to have described Diogenes as 'Socrates gone mad'. There are in fact distinct Socratic characteristics in Diogenes (Dudley, 1937, p. 27). Socratic *eironeia* was a mode of speaking characterised by an apparent frankness which had concealed implicative significances underlying it: the parrhesia of Diogenes is open brutal directness; but it also involves commentary on the way in which people ordinarily think and act. Socrates' reflective restraint (*sophrozyne*) may have been transmogrified into Diogenes' apatheia, a capacity for imperturbable endurance; and Socrates' independent attitude of mind may be thought to correspond with Diogenes' rejection of shame. We could run the risk of constructing some over-strained equations between the two, for the resemblance suggested between Diogenes and Socrates can be suggested also between Socrates and Antisthenes and between Antisthenes and Diogenes. Nevertheless, something substantial remains in the comparison. Diogenes was certainly Socratic enough to justify Plato's alleged witticism.

Diogenes' tragedies probably resembled 'salon' drama rather than the great plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. His *Atreus* and *Thyestes* seem to have argued that there was nothing at all wrong with cannibalism; his *Oedipus* propounded points in favour of incest. For a *cosmopolites*, a professed citizen of the world rather than of the city state, the customs of the Persian aristocracy, which were thought to allow marriage between sons and mothers, seemed as worthy of respectful consideration as the intense prejudice of Greeks against such arrangements. Diogenes' *Medea* showed this powerful and terrifying woman not as a sorceress but a scientist-philosopher engaged in the

legitimate experiments of cutting up an old body (that of Aigeus) as part of a process to renew it by chemical means.

Apart from tragedies and utopian constructs and dialogues, Diogenes developed a mode of expression called the *diatribe*, which was a forceful, not particularly long, but challenging exposition of a philosophical topic. It was protreptic, a sermon, designed to stimulate and persuade; and it has obvious sophistic and Socratic elements in its antecedents. I think we may see one of its ancestors in Socrates' final speech at his trial after sentence has been passed on him. In Plato's *Apologia* Socrates speaks to the jurymen after the formal proceedings are complete, also he discusses the broad questions of death and immortality; justifying the attitudes he himself took in the trial. In it we find the philosopher placing himself at a distance from the ordinary concerns of the world and regarding death as a fulfilment rather than a horror. His speech is a philosophical sermon, and he is attempting to impart his philosophy to his hearers. We can reasonably regard it as a forerunner of the *diatribe*.

Diogenes also composed *chreiai* which became another popular mode of cynic expression. A *chreia* is a short statement of a point of view and it should be witty, neat and powerful. Metrocles collected and edited Diogenes' *chreiai*. Some of their contents pervade the body of anecdotes quoted by later authors which has survived as the main source of the Diogenes tradition.

The story, known to all, of Diogenes walking about in broad day with a lantern and explaining that he was in search of 'a real man' is a *chreia* with a performative element. It is a harsh, brief comment on the degenerate condition of society. Also characteristic of this style of utterance is his comment that people rot themselves with baths and sex and then get themselves embalmed after they die; or people lock up their houses but their bodies are full of apertures. Ridiculed by a man who happened to be bald, he said, 'I have nothing to say about you, but I do congratulate your hair for departing from such a head'.

His view of the noblest elements in mankind; 'to despise wealth, reputation, pleasure, life; and to be superior to their opposites poverty, ill fame, hardship and death' (*Flor.* 8.6.19). This formulation, which surely deserves to be regarded as a *chreia* in form and substance, sums up Diogenes' notion of philosophic askesis.

He may not have been so hard upon himself as his preaching suggests, but he seems honestly to have striven for arete within the terms of the askesis that he recommends.

Diogenes' literary output was large, particularly in proportion to

the extreme reduction he advocated in the facilities of ordinary living (Hoistad, 1948, p. 117). A man who lived like a beggar could only with great difficulty produce fourteen dialogues and seven tragedies (Diogenes Laertius 6, 80-1), and these in the latter portion of his life. The figure is a maximum and was challenged even in antiquity; but even so, his literary production was impressive in its bulk. This does not include diatribai and chreiai; but possibly there was some overlap of the contents of these with the subject matter of his dialogues. The answer to the problem posed by the size of his body of writing has been hinted at: he was not so severe in his way of life as he maintained or advocated.

His influence has been immense, but his philosophy hardly exists in the sense of argued and organised doctrine. There are slight indications that he thought some scientific principle was needed in addition to individual intelligence in order to underpin his complex of attitudes and teaching. For instance, Diogenes Laertius (6. 73) mentions his view that there was nothing wrong in eating any kind of animal flesh, or stealing from a temple. It cannot be wrong because, according to 'correct logic' everything is in everything and pervades everything. This uses Anaxagoras' theory, and unless Anaxagoras is simply being dragged into consideration to prove a particular point, it may be that Diogenes is saying that the principle expounded by Anaxagoras is a foundation for important cynic attitudes. Anaxagoras, it may be noted, held that *nous* (intelligence) was the controlling agent of the universe. Diogenes may — we cannot be sure — be telling us that argument and words are not enough. This story, if true, points in the direction of the Stoics who enlisted natural science to stiffen the slackening sinews of dialectic.

Diogenes is said to have committed suicide, the logical outcome of askesis. One story says that he died of the effects of eating raw octopus, which could be classed as accidental or at least the result of misjudgement forgivable in a nonagenarian. Cercidas says his suicide was by voluntary retention of the breath. Another story says that he was severely bitten while trying to divide an octopus amongst dogs. This seems to be an invention along the lines of poetic justice. However he died, he lived as a vivid and remarkable man. We still can recall with amusement that his only words to Alexander the Great were a rebuke for thoughtlessly casting a shadow over a geometrical diagram, and that his notion of domestic respectability was to make his home in a large disused vat. The core of truth under the strata of anecdote is still readily available.

Crates

Crates was at first taught by Bryson, a Megarian philosopher. Thebes was Crates' native place. He came to Athens to study philosophy. We can put his life span in the last quarter of the fourth century BC and the first quarter of the third century BC. After some time with the Megarian School he became an adherent of Diogenes and a teacher in his own right. Crates came from a prosperous family, but he soon got rid of his wealth. Hipparchia, the daughter of a wealthy family of Maroneia, fell in love with his teachings and his person, and could not be persuaded by her family to give him up. They lived together as man and wife and she became famous as a philosopher, a rare distinction amongst ancient Greek women.

Crates was a man of humorous disposition and good spirits, but yet something of a puritan in his ideas. Nature was his guide, and he followed the utopist tradition of Plato and Diogenes to the extent of describing an ideal state of society. His 'Pera' (which means beggar's or Cynic's wallet) was a city in which all men lived according to nature, taking only what was required for their needs, abstaining from sensuality and war. His criticism of life reduced all human experience to a common denominator of nature. When his son was sufficiently old he took him to a brothel and said, 'Look, here is where your father was married'. A species of puritanism in him made all acts of sexuality seem irrespectively equal manifestations of nature. Yet he and Hipparchia appear to have had a happy relationship in their *kynogamia* ('dog marriage').

A city called Pera in the midst of the wine-dark confusion, fair and fertile, filthy and having no wealth, to whose shore there sails no scrounging, stupid creep nor any sensualist stirred up by the hips of a whore. It produces thyme, onions, figs and loaves, and the people do not go to war with each other for these, and do not bear arms to compete for money and glory. (quoted in Diogenes Laertius 6. 85)

The utopist vision is written in parody of Homer's description of Crete in *Odyssey* 19, 172-3. Pera is *pera*, the Cynic beggar's bag or wallet, a sign of the professed Cynic. Phrase by phrase it mocks the high epic style. This does not mean that Crates wished to pose as a didactic poet in the tradition of Hesiod, Parmenides or Empedocles. He found the Homeric *epos* a suitable vehicle for his very anti-heroic sentiments because it was the staple educational inspiration of the competitive and war-like characteristics of most Greek people. From Archilochus in the

seventh century BC, who criticised 'Homeric' values in his satirical poetry, to Plato, who regarded these values as a potentially dangerous influence in his city of the *Republic* (unless they were intelligently modified), those who wished to change the shape of Greek society tended to criticise Homer. Life is simple in Crates' isolated Utopia. No money, no war. Sensuality is restrained: like the Epicureans and like Antisthenes, Plato and many other Greek philosophers, Crates shared in the widespread and lasting conviction that *eros* was a disruptive disease best kept under strict control. Verses attributed to him in the Greek Anthology and elsewhere (*Append. Planud* 1. 37; *Flor.* 41) suggest that hunger is a good cure for *eros*; if that fails, time will cure it; if that fails, hang yourself.

The people of Pera are 'unbowed and uncaptivated by pleasure fit only for slaves; the immortal kingdom and liberty is what they love.' (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 2. 492) The utopist poem is written in the typical cynic mood of *spoudogeloion* (a mixture of comic and serious). This attitude reminds us of Socrates' *eironeia*.

Life, therefore, should be lived in accordance with nature and it should be simple. Crates believed that the complex conditioning involved in the conventional rearing and education of children did not give them a moment's peace. Teles (active c. 235 BC) informs us that Crates attacked the idea that pleasure should be a main motive in human life. The theory that man should regulate his life by means of counterpoised sets of pleasures produced a life that was intolerable in the complexity of pressures it placed upon the individual. Even the infant was beset with unwanted irritants; its nurse tried to amuse it just when it wanted to sleep. The schoolboy was tormented by his tasks and his teachers and had not a moment free of stimulus. Military service in young manhood; public duties in maturity; these successive disturbers of the mind made the trials of boyhood seem pleasant in retrospect. Then old age came with its own burdens and eventually helpless dependence. Life being what it was, it was impossible to estimate it in terms of a predominance of pleasures over their opposites (based on Teles, p. 38.3).

Such was Crates' attack on hedonism. He had no better liking for dialectic.

Indeed and I saw Stilpo suffering grievous pains in Megara, where they say Confusion has its seat; there he was practising eristic, and many companions around him, pursuing virtue by wordplay they continually wore it down. (Diogenes Laertius 2. 118)

More 'Homeric' versification, in which Stilpo appears as the 'anti-hero'. Eristic argument is rejected as a waste of time. Confusion reigns in Megara. We note that the Greek word which we translate by 'Confusion', *typhos*, was a stock item of philosophical abuse amongst Socratics and Cynics. Antisthenes accuses Plato of *typhos*. It has the connotation of a cloudy, misty, befuddled condition of mind. Pera is situated almost as an island in a sea of *typhos*: its virtuous clarity is contrasted with all that surrounds it. Eristic generates no mental clarity according to Crates.

Hipparchia

We mentioned the story of Hipparchia's love for Crates, whom she chose in preference to her other suitors. Crates did not encourage her to entertain illusions about the life she was so anxious to share with him. He stripped, and pointing first to himself and then to his pile of clothes said, 'Here's your man and there is his property. Now decide'. Hipparchia's mind was already made up and she took readily to the cynic way of life. She and Crates followed nature to the point of engaging in sexual intercourse in public. This attack on the convention of privacy pushed to its logical conclusion the paradigm of 'dog' nature as being most worthy of imitation for its honesty and absence of shame. She is said also to have become accomplished in argument. She argued with Theodorus 'atheos' that any act done by Theodorus which is not unjust, cannot be unjust if it is done by Hipparchia. If Theodorus strikes himself, it is generally agreed that there is nothing unjust in that act: if Hipparchia, in imitation, strikes Theodorus, neither can that act be unjust. After all she is doing exactly the same thing as Theodorus. Theodorus could not answer her, but lost his temper and tore her dress, quoting bitterly from Euripides' *Bacchae* (1236), 'Here's the woman who has left her shuttles lying in the loom'. He meant that she had, like the women of Thebes in the play, left her household duties in pursuit of extreme cults and improper occupations. Also, in her torn clothes, she looked like a Bacchanal. 'I am exactly what you say, Theodorus,' she said, 'but in case you think I didn't know what I was doing, I spent the time I would have wasted at the loom educating myself.' The story, if true, illustrates readiness of wit and a capacity for mockery rather than enthusiasm for eristic in itself.

Monimos

Monimos was a pupil of Diogenes and Crates, famous enough in his time to be mentioned as a droll example in one of Menander's comedies (Diogenes Laertius 6. 82-3). Some of the information about him (and it is not much) seems to be associated with the invented story of the sale (prasis) of Diogenes into slavery. It seems that like many Cynics, he felt free to develop idiosyncratic traits: the Menandrian quotation says that he had three *perai* (beggar's wallets) instead of the customary one. This might mean he was three times more a Cynic than others of the persuasion, or it might allude to a fondness for money improper in a Cynic.

He is said to have abolished the *kriterion*, which means he did not believe that there was any standard of judgement which enables us to attain knowledge. Both Diogenes Laertius (6.82-3) and Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 7. 221) agree on this. All theory was nonsense (typhos) according to him. We know nothing, but even that assertion, he claimed, was subject to the nonsense rule and we could not even be sure of that. According to this view our knowledge of the world is non-existent: all we experience is a shadowy impression, *skiagraphia* (shadow drawing), the stuff of dreams. He wrote in the semi-jocular style favoured by Cynics (*spoudogeloion*). Two works of his are mentioned by Diogenes Laertius: *On Instinct* and *In Favour of Philosophy*.

Onesicritus

Onesicritus of Astypyleia also was a pupil of Diogenes the Cynic. He accompanied Alexander of Macedon (The Great) on his expedition of conquest in Asia. He was an accomplished seaman and, together with Nearchus, took a fleet of ships on a voyage of exploration through the Persian Gulf. Diogenes Laertius (6. 4) aptly compares him with Xenophon. Onesicritus, a writer and a man of philosophical interests, went with Alexander's expedition. Xenophon, a man of philosophical interests and a writer, went with Cyrus' expedition deep into the territories of the Persian Empire. Onesicritus' book on Alexander, which he wrote when he came back from the expedition, seems somewhat to have resembled Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. The author himself may even have compared the two (Hoistad, 1948, p. 90). It was part history, part romance, full of extravagances. It remained popular well into the second century AD. Amongst tall stories about elephants and whales he

describes some ascetic customs of Indian so-called *gymnosophistai* (naked Sophists) the disciplinary rigours of whom, he suggests, make people like Socrates and Diogenes seem to put *nomos* before *physis* (Hoistad, 1948, p. 135 ff). As a cynic-trained individual (rather than a cynic philosopher), he seemed to be the best person for Alexander to send to investigate the 'gymnosophist' philosophy (Strabo, (first century BC/AD) 15, 1. 63-5). In typical cynic style he considered *ponos* to be more-or-less equivalent to the life lived according to *physis*.

Metrocles

Metrocles was the brother of Hipparchia. For a time he was a pupil of Theophrastus. His health was weak, and in the course of a speech that he was rehearsing he inadvertently farted. The incident made him so depressed that he determined to commit suicide by starving himself to death.

Crates persuaded him to eat a sustaining meal of lupins, and followed this by offering him the restorative argument that he had done nothing unnatural in breaking wind for it was no crime. Crates himself then farted as an act of encouragement and solidarity with Metrocles, who was so cheered by this that he took to the cynic philosophy.

This is substantially the account of Metrocles' conversation in Diogenes Laertius (6. 94-5). The scene is worthy of Aristophanes, but its absurdity and rejection of ordinary norms of decent behaviour is characteristic of cynic *parrhesia* and *anaideia*. I think Diogenes' anecdote is not necessarily derived from anti-philosophical sources. It is just as likely to be part of the cynic tradition illustrating these two cynic qualities. Metrocles is said to have been expert in the composition of cynic *chreiai* and to have collected Diogenes' *chreiai*. No original or startling views are linked with his name. He objected to wealth unless it was put to good use (Diogenes Laertius). He divided things into those which are got by money (e.g. houses and other property) and those which take time and care, like education. This piece of elementary dialectic tells us little about his thought. He had several notable pupils, including Menippus. In old age and presumably bad health he once more decided to die and successfully did so. He was an amiable but ailing rich eccentric.

Menippus

Menippus was active in the earlier half of the third century BC. Originally he was from Gadara; he was a Phoenician who became a slave at Sinope. He also became a Theban citizen, a financier, merchant trader, a miser who gave his greed and meanness the colour of cynic philosophy. Cheated of his funds, he hanged himself (Diogenes Laertius 6. 99-101).

Yet he had intellectual interests and was a writer of several works. One of these, his *Nekuia*, like its famous counterpart, Homer's *Odyssey* Book 11, was about the underworld of the dead, and it may have influenced Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*. He composed the story of Diogenes being sold into slavery (prasis). The tale involved a number of paradoxical and amusing consequences that typify the spoudogeloion blend of seriousness and absurdity. 'He looks as if he needs a master' Diogenes is made to say of a prospective buyer. According to the tradition of the prasis, the great Cynic proved to be a notable and original educator of his owner's children. Other works attributed to Menippus are *Last Wills and Testaments* (probably satirical: the genre was to persist into Roman times); epistles supposed to have been written by the gods; polemics against physical scientists, mathematicians and experts on grammar; also, a book about the birth of Epicurus. He gave his name to a minor but not insignificant literary type, the Menippean Satire, a mixture of humorous and reflective prose and verse material. The Roman author Varro (first century BC) used this literary form, but only fragments of his *Menippea* are left. Boethius (fifth century AD) used Menippean Satire as a model for his poignant and tragic *Consolation of Philosophy*, which he wrote in a prison from which he was never to emerge alive. Menippus was a humorous and spirited person in spite of his miserly qualities; but his temperament had a dark and depressive obverse, and cynic laughter could not ultimately save him.

Bion

Bion lived a life of remarkable vicissitudes and horrifying adventures. His story is not unlike that of Phaedo or the hero of some Hellenistic novel. He emerged as a strong, balanced and humane man from experiences which would have broken even an ordinarily robust personality. His reputation for arrogance, however, may show that he felt defensive

about his origins and his degrading experiences. Borysthene was his native town. It was situated in the region we now call the Crimea. It was formerly called Olbia, and was an ancient trading settlement of Miletus, the home of early Greek philosophy. There was little of philosophical interest going on in this workaday place, though it seems that the inhabitants had more than the usual Greek passion for the Homeric epic (Dio Chrysostom 30. 6).

Bion's lifetime spans the latter part of the fourth century BC and the first part of the third century. Possibly (as he is supposed to have said) he was the offspring of a hetaira and a fishmonger. Nevertheless, his family seems to have been prosperous until it was overwhelmed by financial disaster, one result of which was that Bion was sold into slavery. He was bought by a teacher of rhetoric who used him as a fancy-boy. When this educator died Bion inherited his property. Bion sold it and went to Athens on the proceeds in order to study philosophy.

He attended various schools of philosophy. The Academy of Plato under the leadership of Xenocrates was not a negligible contributor to his intellectual development. If he was taught by Xenocrates, he must have come to Athens before 314 BC. Theodorus (Chapter 11) also taught him, and Aristotle's pupil Theophrastus contributed to his philosophical education. Crates the Cynic was probably his most influential teacher.

In this mixture of Platonic, Cyrenaic, peripatetic and cynic teaching, cynic attitudes emerged predominant in his philosophy. Yet he shows traces of Socratic inspiration which may come not so much from the Academy as from Crates and Theodorus. Bion respected Socrates' frankness and integrity in dealing with the recurrent problems of human life. His image of Socrates was, as far as we can tell, the Socrates of Xenophon rather than Plato, possessed of the cynic qualities of *autarkeia* and *apatheia*.

Diogenes Laertius calls Bion a 'subtle' (*poikilos*) Sophist (4.47). He also uses the adjective *polytropos* of him, the typical attribute of Odysseus which now meant something a little less favourable than its Homeric meaning 'resourceful'. The sources which inform Diogenes Laertius found Bion hard to define not only as a philosopher, but as a person. Hence, perhaps, this idea of polytropic trickiness seemed to describe him as satisfactorily as could be managed. There appears to be a prejudice against him in the doxographic tradition because of his homosexuality in his earlier years as a slave. It is comprehensible enough by the ordinary standards of antiquity that Bion's unfortunate

situation should bring him a measure of disgrace. Slaves were not in command of the use to which their bodies could be put, but they still could be polluted by suffering involuntary dishonour. This was considered one of the chief horrors of slavery.

Bion's way of life was extravagant, and he charged heavy sums for his teaching. His reputed utterances have a distinctly cynic flavour: 'not to be able to endure evil is the greatest evil' (Diogenes Laertius 4. 48) is a fair example. But he also shows a respect for property which is in no respect cynical. 'Wealth is the sinews of achievement.' He left an inheritance of sayings and epigrams behind him, also, we are told, some *diatribai*. He visited Antigonus Gonatas at Pella, and Diogenes Laertius tells us of the frankness, palliated by mock serious Homeric quotations, with which he described his career and antecedents to the king. He was an Odyssean character who tried to make the best of the circumstances in which he found himself in each stage of his wanderings. He taught that happiness should be pursued positively in this world. He knew enough of hardship himself not to recommend it vigorously; but he remains, on balance, more cynic than Cyrenaic. His capacity for endurance was as remarkable as his good spirits.

Teles

Teles was a Megarian school teacher who was active in his career about 240 BC. His language retains some Doric local colouring in its vocabulary. Our earliest information about him comes from Stobaeus (fifth century AD). We are indebted to this compiler of quotations and themes from earlier authors and for the preservation of considerable passages from Teles' *diatribai* which are uninspiring representatives of their species, but useful because they are probably representative of average cynic thought. Stobaeus' material on Teles comes from a summary of his work made by an author called Theodorus, otherwise unknown (not the Theodorus of Chapter 11).

Teles' *diatribai* are simple dialectical exercises which make no intellectual advance at all upon work of previous generations; in fact they are in most respects inferior. He preserves useful information about Crates, Diogenes and others. His main themes are typical of cynic philosophers: questions relating to wealth, poverty, *autarkeia*.

Cercidas

Cercidas of Megalopolis in Arcadia was active in the politics of his city in the second half of the third century BC. Involvement in the government of a city was not a responsibility Cynics tended to seek, but Cercidas was nevertheless a cynic philosopher. In a war between Megalopolis and Sparta he held an important military command. Megalopolis unfortunately fell to the Spartans, and after this event Cercidas was in command of forces in Messene. When Megalopolis was restored to liberty, Cercidas was appointed *nomothetes*, or legislative commissioner, with the task of drawing up a new constitution. The historian Polybius (c. 200-128 BC) gives an account of the military operations in the second book of his histories of the Achaean League. Cercidas was a skilled diplomatic negotiator who managed to obtain help from the king, Antigonus Doson of Macedonia, for the organisation of states which Megalopolis led. Diogenes Laertius (6.76) mentions an alternative origin for Cercidas in Crete, and it is possible that he spent some years in that island. In spite of doubts about Cercidas' identity raised by Stephanus (sixth century AD) in his book on cities (under the heading *Megale Polis*), it seems certain that we should identify Stephanus' 'melianic poet' with this statesman and legislator of the Achaean League. An earlier Cercidas of Megalopolis, contemporary with Demosthenes and ridiculed by him in his speech *On the Crown* 295, can hardly be the poet whose verses in commemoration of Diogenes the Cynic are quoted in Diogenes Laertius 6. 76-7. Diogenes died about 323 BC, and the verses speak of him as long dead. Demosthenes' speech was delivered in 331 BC, and his Cercidas must be an earlier one whose life overlapped that of Diogenes the Cynic.

Considerable papyrus fragments of Cercidas' poetry were discovered in 1906 and published in 1911 (Hunt, 1911). These specifically refer to Cercidas the Cynic (*Kerkida kynos meliamboi*) as author (Dudley, 1937, p. 75). Of Diogenes the Cynic Cercidas says:

Not the Sinopean of long ago
that walking-stick addict, with doubled cloak,
dweller under the open sky:
Off he went to death, crushing his lip against
his teeth
to bite in his breath.
Truly he was, as his name says, Diogenes (which means
generated by Zeus the sky god)
a dog of the heavens.

This passage is quoted by Diogenes Laërtius 6. 76-7. It mentions one of the several methods of suicide attributed to Diogenes. The poet clearly does not know Diogenes in person; he merely reveres a legend. The references to the stick, the austerly doubled cloak and the tough *apatheia* of his voluntary end are hagiography not history, though they might possibly be true.

The next piece is from the *Papyrus* (1082. 2; Hunt, 1911, pp. 29-30). It is a cynic diatribe in verse dealing with the topics of corrupt wealth and the indifference of the gods to human interests.

[Why didn't Fortune] reduce to poverty the profligate
 Xenon and give us the money now running to futility?
 What is there to prevent this, if somebody asked her.
 It's easy for a god to bring about whatever
 comes into his mind, and to evacuate of
 his stink-pig wealth the dirty-cheat usurer
 and slaughter-ha'pence miser or the ruin merchant that
 pours away his property, and give the cursed cash to the man who
 scrapes along as he needs must and who shares a
 glass with a friend.
 Is Justice's eye mole-blinded? Is the
 driver of the sun chariot squinting monocular?
 Is elegant Righteousness suffering from eye-trouble?
 How can these who have neither hearing nor vision
 be gods?
 And of course in the middle of Olympus [sits] the
 star-driver in his glory holding his scales evenly
 balanced and making no decision.
 That's what Homer says in the *Iliad*:
 'The balance moves when destined day comes for famous men.'
 Why doesn't the upright holder of the balance
 push it down towards me, or even to Phrygia
 at the far side of the Mysoi?

He continues with further complaints about the indifference of the gods to the business of making justice manifest amongst men; he questions the whole idea of a god-like Zeus, the father of all, who cares so little for his creatures. No point, he concludes, in worrying about such matters. We must, he says, honour *Paian*, the goddess of curing disease and caring for others; and also a new goddess whom he names '*Metados*', '*Fairshare*'. They are goddesses of the earth, and are

involved with us. In case we suspect him of becoming dangerously tender-hearted, he adds that we should also worship Nemesis, the spirit of earthly retribution. But the real aim we should have before us is to cast off our desires for property and wealth.

Possibly his notion of divine callousness owes something to Epicurus. His expression in another Papyrus poem (Hunt, 1911, p. 33, fg. 2) that love blows either as a hurricane or as a favouring breeze is impeccably cynic in its implication that sex should be a matter of physical release rather than emotional captivity. Yet the image of storm applied to love also recalls a similar use by Epicurus of storm as a metaphor of love (Dudley, 1937, p. 81).

Cercidas' poetic style is a mixture of ornate, artificial mannerism and fury. Cynic apatheia driven by poetic emotion produces this amalgam, a product out of harmony with apatheia. In artistic terms the poems amount of something more than diatribai merely set down in verse.

Cercidas as poet, law-giver and political leader belongs to the old tradition of Solon (early sixth century BC), who gave Athens her first really articulate constitution, was a political leader of considerable note and a poet of high distinction. We may remember also that the Athenians gave Protagoras the task of drawing up laws for the new city of Thurii in 441 BC. Although Cercidas was a man of authority and a ruler of others, he also seems to know what it is like to be the victim of unjust power on the loose in a badly organised society. Like Hesiod, another poet who used his poetry to teach, Cercidas felt with great intensity the lack of justice in the world.

Cynicism was a persistent strand of Greco-Roman philosophical thought as century succeeded century. In the Julio-Claudian principates and in the following centuries it was represented by philosophers of courage and character who have been remembered. I shall mention a few of these now.

Demetrius

Demetrius the Cynic was a contemporary of the younger Seneca (4 BC to 65 AD) and is mentioned frequently in his philosophical writings. He seems to have maintained in an austere form the original cynic values of apatheia and the parrhesia and ponos. A life without hardship was, in his opinion, a complete void (Seneca 67. 14). Integrity was one of his notable characteristics, together with a constancy in his views which has overtones both of stoic philosophy and the traditional

republican virtue of Rome. Cynics, as we know, had little time for organised society, which they considered to be an artificial nuisance standing between humanity and the natural life. Under the Roman principate, especially as it was represented by such men as Caligula or Nero, society was an easily identified abomination rather than an impediment to virtue. Demetrius was unbending in his hostility to the rule of the emperor. He was a member of the circle of intellectuals cultivated by Thrasea Paetus, a leading opponent of Nero's misrule. When Thrasea committed his compelled suicide, Demetrius was banished. He talked with Thrasea just before his death, administering the consolations of philosophy. Even when Demetrius was eventually restored to Rome he could not lay aside his parrhesia, and he subjected Vespasian to abusive criticism. Vespasian is supposed to have said to him, 'You are doing all you can to get me to kill you, but I'm not going to murder a howling dog.' (Dio Cassius 66. 11, 13; Suetonius, *Vespasian* 13)

Certain Romans under the principate longed for the old days of republican liberty, forgetting that it also involved society in destructive chaos caused by competing warlords like Pompey, Crassus and Julius Caesar. However, life for any individual of outstanding character under the Julio-Claudian emperors was sufficiently insecure to induce forgetfulness of the bad aspects of the republic. Philosophically minded and socially prominent citizens sought the friendship and advice of stoic and cynic philosophers, who seemed to preach an intellectualised version of the old Roman *constantia* and *virtus*. Plots, real and imaginary, against the principate emanated from such groups and they were savagely punished. Demetrius was part of this enduring but disorganised strand of opposition to monarchy. His philosophy had the practical application of helping to keep alive the notion of civil liberty that could easily have been completely extinguished.

Dio Cocceianus

Dio Cocceianus, later called 'Chrysostomus' (golden-mouthed), was born about 40 AD. His family was rich and prominent in their native city of Prusa in Bithynia. His training was not philosophical but that of a Sophist and rhetorician and distinctly hostile to philosophy. Only harsh necessity made him take to cynic philosophy later in his life, so that he properly described himself as a 'self-created philosopher' (*Oration* 1.9).

When his father died he lived a life of pleasure for a while. Then he made his way to Rome, where he became friendly with Flavius Sabinus, the stepson of the emperor Titus. Dio was banished when Flavius Sabinus incurred the dislike of Domitian. He was allowed neither to remain in Rome nor to live in his native province. Through the Greek world and large portions of Asia Minor and southern Europe he began his protracted wanderings as a cynic philosopher, earning his living from casual and menial work, or else, which was no shame for a Cynic, by begging. Cynics did not think that begging was inconsistent with their notion of *autarkeia*. Rather it was an indication of how little they needed from the world.

In the reign of Nerva Dio was allowed to return to Rome. He became a close friend of the emperor Trajan. Philosophy soon lost its attractions in favour of public service, and he became established as Trajan's special adviser on matters concerning the Greek half of the empire.

We have about eighty speeches attributed to Dio. Some of them admittedly are spurious attributions. He remained an orator even in his years of enforced cynic *askesis*. No doubt he was a most accomplished speaker: there is no reason to doubt that he was able by his oratory and argument to mitigate the fury of a body of Roman troops who were disturbed by the murder of Domitian, a man whom only the soldiers liked. His style was typical of the revival of classical Greek usage which has been called the 'Second Sophistic' movement. His works reflect the cynic values of *anaideia*, *autarkeia* and the cynic *askesis*, which he practised without the option of doing otherwise during his nomadic years. *Arete* was for him the main object of philosophical attainment — in this he was at one with other Cynics — and he was a constant advocate of the claims of *physis*. Sympathy for the condition of mankind, *philanthropia*, also was important to him, and in his writings on kingship he stresses the need for a king to function as conciliator, the bringer of concord amongst people, that *homonoia* which was as much a stoic as a cynic conception.

Also amongst his speeches are *Sokratikoi Logoi*, one of which (Oration 13), it has been thought, may contain early material, possibly from Antisthenes. Altogether he led a productive and adventurous life, and his writings, as well as being of independent value, are full of useful source references. He survived well into the reign of Trajan (98-117 AD), whom he compared to that great cynic hero and sufferer of *ponos* on behalf of others, Heracles.

Demonax

Demonax of Cyprus lived in the time of Hadrian. A life of Demonax is attributed to Lucian, but it is a work of little sharpness or wit, and if genuine, must be uncharacteristic of that author. Nevertheless, we can be reasonably assured that he was teaching in Athens around 150 AD. He may still have been active there at the end of the decade when Peregrinus Proteus, Cynic, convert Christian and eventual apostate, arrived in Athens. Peregrinus Proteus killed himself by throwing himself on the ceremonial fire at the Olympic Games in 165 AD. Demonax had as his teachers Demetrius and Epictetus, who were Cynics, and Agathoboulus the Stoic. Again we must bear in mind the areas of overlap between these two philosophical persuasions. Demonax was neither a Cynic nor a Stoic in anything like the full sense of either term. He did not follow the cynic way of life. A certain over-tuned Socraticism is evident in his reply to the question, 'When did you begin to pursue philosophy?'. He answered, 'When I first began to condemn myself.' Many remarks are attributed to him which show an acute wit. For example, 'Uneducated people are like the fishes caught by fishermen; silent'. Also he thought that friends were more dangerous than enemies, because we know how to take precautions against enemies.

Oenomaus

Oenomaus was from Gadara in Syria. He lived in Hadrian's time and he seems to have spent much of his life wandering from place to place. His writings and attitudes followed a cynic pattern recognisable from the precedent and example of Diogenes. Titles of his works illustrate this: *On Cynicism*, *Politeia*, *On Crates and Diogenes*. The 'Philosophy of Homer' was another topic on which he wrote, also he seems to have had much to say in criticism of the oracles. His was the 'authentic voice of the dog', attacking oracular prophecies as we are told by the 'apostate' emperor Julian (*Oration*, 7. 209). Julian also mentions Oenomaus' tragedies which contain cynic *anaideia*, and probably resembled the species of anti-tragedy that Diogenes wrote under the name of tragedy. He is also supposed to have ridiculed the poet Archilochus (seventh century BC) for his foul language, which is an unexpected sensitivity in a Cynic. More understandable in cynic terms is his dislike of athletes. His attack on oracles, particularly that of Delphi, draws attention to the commonplace character of his writings. His view seemed to be 'It does not require a god to tell us the like of that'.

14 CONCLUSION

The groups discussed in the course of this book, the Sophists, Socratics and Cynics, placed the reasoning, arguing intellect at the centre of affairs. Objective nature was for them mostly a paradigm or a source of arguments to be used against the inherited values of city-state life. From the last quarter of the fifth century BC onwards, the city state was an artefact so fractured that the trained mind of the sophistically educated man could argue that he owed it to himself to outwit its regulations. Or it was an environment to be regarded with hostility and contempt, as Cynics generally saw it. They found it useful to exploit the resources of the city for the modest bread of survival and to provide them with an audience; but for little else. They were much more modest exploiters than the Sophists. Megarians, Eretrians, Cyrenaics and the rest varied in their attitudes to organised society, but they found the cities of Greece useful refuges and sources of income. Socrates challenged the values of the city state in order better to support it on a foundation of critical awareness, if not actual knowledge. Plato attempted to remould the city in terms of reality and nature as he perceived their direction to lie in the light of his Theory of Forms. (Aristotle, too, attempted to design a constitution whose laws were in tune with natural principles.) This was not the raw, aggressive 'nature' of Antiphon or Callicles; but 'nature' as the truth of things. Cynics, in their mock utopian city constitutions, ridiculed these aims by retaining a harsh, primitivist concept of 'nature' in the context of constitutional design.

Physical science was not of cardinal importance in the philosophy of any of these groups. It irrigated their scepticism about the inherited order of society, but had little effect beyond that. Because he was a 'meteorosophistes', Socrates was likely (according to Aristophanes' argument) to entertain disbelief about the gods. But science was not really integral in the thought of dialecticians, antilogicians or eristics. Science added to Socraticism eventually produced a philosophy that outlived all the Socratic groups except the Cynics. This was Stoicism, an offshoot of the cynic movement; and it looked back to Socrates as one of its original patrons.

Zeno of Citium in Cyprus was its originator. He was taught by Crates the Cynic and Stilpo the Megarian. He himself began to teach in the Stoa Poikile (Painted Portico) of Athens about the year 308 BC.

The history of the philosophical school that stemmed from him and the contributions of his successors to its evolution, form another story. Like the Socratics and Cynics, Stoics regarded *arete* as the primary human aim and value. Arete was not simply what the philosopher sought to attain; it was coincident with philosophy itself. The philosopher becomes a man apart, and his separateness is established in theory; though philosophers had in fact been somewhat alien in the city state since the time of Socrates. This separateness is associated with his pursuit of arete. But even if he was separate, he had an imperative duty to play his part in the life of the world and society; he was expected to serve his society as far as that service was consonant with his arete as a philosopher and the operations of the cosmos itself.

Stoicism had three main intellectual preoccupations — *physis*, logic and ethics. In logic the Stoics cultivated the beginnings of a propositional logic that Diodorus, Menedemos and Philo had done much to germinate. They developed in an ingenious way the study of negation, conjunction and implication, which we would now describe as propositional functors (Mates, 1952, pp. 27-41). Stoic physics postulated a cosmos which was the embodiment of a non-material force, partly an agent and in part passive. The active portion was soul. The Stoics borrowed from Heraclitus the notion that fire was the most important cosmic ingredient permeating the whole. It was closer to the active element; and though it pervaded everything, it was especially present in the heavens: fire was an intelligent, active and creative element, water and earth were more passive. The universe periodically became absorbed in a complete conflagration from which it once more emerged. It was considered to be a live god; but often god was also thought to be the soul of the universe. The individual human soul was an emanation of the universal soul and was accordingly regarded as divine. The individual human soul was immortal, in the sense that it remained as a separate identity after an individual's death until it was assimilated eventually in the next cosmic conflagration to the soul of the universe itself.

I do not propose to give an account of Stoicism, even in outline, and I shall go into no more detail. For further information I suggest reference to Rist, 1969, and Sambursky, 1959. The point I want to make here is that Stoicism, taking its beginning from an area of philosophy which emphasised dialectic — and dialectic remained an important element in Stoicism — acquired a vertebral stiffening of natural science that made it more workable and practical as a set of doctrines or beliefs by which a man could live in a harsh world. It made the

individual integral in a universe to which, as a living portion of a living whole, he owed his duty in the pursuit of arete. The problem of 'being' also was solved by the infusion into Socratic-cynic thinking of a scientific picture of reality which though it was old fashioned, was nevertheless rational. The problem of movement and change which tormented many of the Socratics was no longer an insurmountable problem in a universe which itself was possessed of life and movement.

Entities were material (for the universe was material animated by soul). The problems involved in perceiving them were alleviated. The particular was the only reality that could be grasped; universals only existed as thought. Particulars acted upon each other, 'like' affecting 'like'. Impressions (*phantasiai*) of the particular were presented to minds understood to be susceptible of processing them by judgement, and eventually grasping them in rational and valid conviction. In such a world the individual was at home on a grand scale, and was induced to think of his actions in terms of a cosmic morality. For a Stoic, a cynic-style *apatheia* was to be cultivated as a personal trait, but it differed from the Cynic's practised insensibility of spirit, and admitted the emotions provided they were under the control of rationality. Emotions were not regarded as entirely discontinuous with reason, for it was recognised that emotions could themselves function as judgement. *Autarkeia*, independence, also was recommended; but this was not the snarling defiance of cynic philosophers; it was a balanced and reasonable moral attitude. Arete, the chief pursuit, was more or less equated with 'good'. 'Good' was what promoted arete rather than arete a tropism towards 'good'.

In Stoicism, those who favoured the idea of a single god in nature, ('*atheoi*', like Antisthenes, for instance) were brought home and made conformable to the customs and needs of the city state. The demands of the city state's gods were admitted as legitimate aspects of the universal intelligence. The worshipper could assure himself, if he was a Stoic, that his devotions to these deities were really aimed in the direction of a truth of which they were local and partial representatives.

This development of Socratic thought gave the individual a sense of purpose that was more practical than the simple pursuit of arete through toil, hardship and alienation. Dialectic needed a 'scientific' framework to make it a credible component of systematic philosophy rather than a lifestyle.

Another philosophy which designed a structure of thought for people who could no longer remain, to recall Pericles' words, 'in love with their city state', was founded by a man called Epicurus (340-270

BC). He was of Athenian parentage and was born in Samos where his parents were colonists in a remaining fragment of the formerly great Athenian empire. The family was displaced from the island in 323 BC together with other Athenian residents and resided first in Colophon, then in Teos. While he was still living in Samos, Epicurus was taught by the Platonist philosopher Pamphilus, which gives him an indirect but not negligible link with the Socratic-Platonic tradition. In Teos he was the pupil of a philosopher called Nausiphanes. He taught the physical theory of Democritus who held that the universe was material and consisted of (1) basic material particles, and (2) the void in which they were able to move in order to form the various objects of the world in which we live. This was a turning point in Epicurus' life. He embraced this philosophy and deduced from it an ethic that protected humanity from the pains and shocks and frustration and despair in an increasingly insecure and chaotic social environment.

The materiality of everything in the world (even the human soul was composed of material particles) withdrew from mankind the terrors of the supernatural. Death was the dissolution of the constituent particles of body and soul: it was not to be feared because nothing could come after it. The process of being born was painless: so was the non-existence that preceded it. There was no reason why dying or being dead should be any different in this respect. The gods existed, but they were remote, indifferent, and in no way to be feared. Society and its preoccupations were irrelevant. The important thing was to pursue pleasure, not in the form of sensual indulgence, which would inevitably bring anguish, but in the sense of an 'absence of stimulus' (the Epicureans' term *ataraxia* means precisely that). Epicurus founded a school in Mitylene and later in Lampsacus. In 306 BC he came to Athens and founded his famous school and community, the 'garden', in which he and his students and friends could pursue philosophy undisturbed. Membership of this community was not confined to men. Women could also be members, even *hetairai*. The way of life was calm; but it is not surprising that Epicurus' opponents accused him and his friends of conducting orgies. But the Epicureans were occupied in applying in a fairly dull and systematic way, the conclusions of an old-fashioned scientific theory to the problems of daily living.

In the emphasis upon pleasure even in the mild form of *ataraxia*, Epicureanism could be regarded as adopting and modifying the main principle of the Cyrenaic School. If that is a reasonable viewpoint, then it may also be admitted that the Cyrenaic influence is the only really discernible link between Epicureanism and the Socratic

philosophies. Influence of a more diffuse kind emanating from Socrates and his successors may be seen in the fact that Epicureanism was unworldly in its attitude to the city state and its affairs. In this it may be considered to follow broadly the attitude of the Socratics who were deeply affected by the trauma of Socrates' death. The gathering together of like-minded philosophers in collegiate communities begins with Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum, which had very little to do with the mainstream of Athenian life. The germ of these can be seen in the huddling together for mutual comfort and support of Socrates' pupils in Megara, for instance, in the diaspora of his friends after 399 BC. Cynics preferred to remain at large, gnawing at the edges of society; their offshoots, the Stoic School, as we have seen, interpreted Diogenes' notion of the philosopher as world-citizen in a positive and energetically motivated sense. The secure community which they sought beyond the city state was the world itself. But it was the Stoics who gave that world a structure and organisation practicably relevant to the needs of its individual citizens. Sophists, Socratics and Cynics were concerned with what the individual can accomplish by means of his own intellect and powers of expression. This they had in common, though their aims and methods varied. The favourable environment for the practice and application of rhetoric and dialectic was the city state in time of its power and independence. Socrates' reaction against Sophistry, applied to education and thus to politics, foreshadowed the decline of creative democratic politics in Athens. The dialectician could then only propose re-creation of his old environment on more favourable terms, as Plato attempted to do in his *Republic*; or follow a path that led to extremes of Socratically inspired individualism. Cynics were to continue in a varied and independent fashion for many centuries, snapping at the heels of Hellenistic society with its great monarchies and at the Roman world state. At worst they were sources of pawky and irritating talk and prepared to be content with no form of social organisation. At best they, and some Stoics, were friends of human liberty.

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